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ALFIE GETS SEVEN FIGURE PAYOUT

Report by Richard Guttridge

THE family of an eight-year-old Stourbridge boy left severely disabled after mistakes were made by midwives during his birth at Russells Hall Hospital have been awarded a seven-figure payout.

The sum will ensure Alfie Johnson is able to receive the specialist round-the-clock care, which he will need for the rest of his life.

Alfie's brain was starved of oxygen during labour after midwives at Russells Hall Hospital missed signs that the baby was in distress. He was born with severe brain damage resulting in cerebral palsy.

His parents, Paul and Vickie, from Amblescote, who have gone on to campaign for children with disabilities, spoke of their relief that Alfie's future care has been secured. They were awarded the compensation at the High Court in London on Thursday. The exact figure received has not been disclosed.

Mr Johnson said: "It's a relief to get to this point and it means Alfie's needs will be met for the rest of his life."

"We are grateful that (solicitors) JMW obtained an admission of negligence from the trust and we were able to agree a settlement out of court but all this was avoidable. Alfie was a healthy baby before Vickie went into hospital – that's something I think about a lot."

Apologised

Dudley Group of Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust, which runs Russells Hall, admitted the failings in 2011 and apologised to the family.

Mr Johnson said: "He is a remarkable little boy and we've pulled together as a family. I just want to say to other parents who are in the same situation not to give up hope. Bringing a case against a hospital is not an easy journey but there is light at the end of the tunnel."

Trust chief executive Paula Clark, said: "The Dudley Group NHS Foundation Trust is pleased that the agreement reached between the parties has been approved by the court. The circumstances surrounding Alfie's birth on November 11, 2007 have been investigated extensively and a full admission of liability was made in August 2011. We would like to take the opportunity to reiterate that we are truly sorry and we are pleased a settlement has been reached which we hope will go some way to meeting Alfie's future needs."

Alfie's parents formed the Friends of Alfie Johnson charity in 2009, which supports children with disabilities.



Alfie – care for life

BLIND DAVE BACKING THE BLACK COUNTRY RUN



Dave Heeley and his guide dog Seamus with The Big Pet Store owner Mike Burke and Black Country Run organiser Alan Bowler

ORGANISERS of the annual Black Country Run in Halesowen hope that the event will continue to grow – after raising more than £75,000 in four years.

This year's run is on July 3 and has enjoyed some high profile support, including from multiple marathon runner Blind Dave Heeley, who is a regular participant.

Entries for the run, which is on the roads of Halesowen, have increased each year from 400 in 2012 to more than 1,100 last year. A 10km road race and 5km fun run will be held on the day.

This summer's event, again organised by Halesowen and Rowley Regis Rotary Club, has been supported by three major sponsors

The Big Pet Store in Halesowen, CSCM in Stourbridge and Halesowen-based mFortune.

"We're grateful to our sponsors as we wouldn't be able to host the run without them," said organiser Alan Bowler.

The support of Blind Dave is also very much appreciated, he's quite a character. Last year he came dressed as Shrek with his two fellow runners – this year they're considering the three blind mice."

The 10km race begins at 9am with the 5km fun run beginning at 11am. Both start where Birmingham Street meets with Rumbow before heading out for laps of the town.

Mr Bowler added: "We've been growing year on year and hopefully it continues."

"It's good for the borough and the local area. We want to thank the three sponsors and Dudley Council who handle the organising of roads and do a very safe job. The more entrants the better so I encourage people to get registered!"

See www.theblackcountryroadrun.com

ELECTION

No party at council in overall control

DUDLEY Council looks set to be run with no party in overall control after UKIP ruled out a formal coalition with either Labour or the Conservatives – and Labour ruled out working with UKIP.

Labour remains the biggest party on the council but was left without an overall majority after last week's dramatic elections, which saw some seats changing hands over the matter of a handful of votes.

It leaves UKIP's eight councillors in an influential position.

• Balance of power – see page 2

INDUSTRY

Seven bidders in talks over Tata Steel

TATA Steel is in talks with seven potential buyers interested in its UK operations, including its Black Country sites.

The company employs 11,000 people in the UK with around 750 at sites in Brierley Hill, Wednesfield, Walsall and Wednesbury.

On Monday the board of Tata Steel Europe said seven 'expressions of interest' for the whole of the UK business had been submitted and immediately taken forward to the next stage of the sale process.

COMMUNITY

Council cuts see bloom hopes droop

THE organisers of Stourbridge in Bloom have pulled out of the floral display contest this year because cuts mean Dudley Council's financial support being withdrawn, despite past success in the community event.

Alan Lunt, a strategic director at Dudley Council, said: "We need to look for new ways of delivering the 'bloom' events in the light of reduced funding for services and will be looking to seek greater input from voluntary and business groups and the wider community. We will work with them in an advisory capacity to look at sourcing external funding."

• Plans wither – see page 8

INSIDE

THE MAYOR'S BIG NIGHT OUT



PAGE 13



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MARK ANDREWS	6
LETTERS	7
CLUBS	12
MEMORY LANE	18
THE FAST TICKET	21
PROPERTY	29
MOTORING	37
SPORT	39 & 40

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Jamieson second stint as commissioner



David Jamieson, back as PCC

LABOUR'S David Jamieson has been elected to serve as the West Midlands Police and Crime Commissioner for a second term.

He was the first choice of 49.9 per cent of voters and finished ahead of Tory candidate Les Jones, voted for by 25.8 per cent.

Mr Jamieson, a former transport minister under Tony Blair, first took up the role in August 2014, following the death of former Wolverhampton councillor Bob Jones. Following his re-election he will remain in post until 2020.

He said: "I think that in 20 months

in the role I have made a good start and made changes in a number of areas. The thing I want to continue with is recruiting."

"I have brought in 400 new officers of the 450 I promised – and I would have done all of them had the Government not cut the budget by a further 25 per cent.

Knives

"There has also been the Victims' Commission and things like the zombie knives campaign which have been a success."

Turnout at this year's PCC elections were up. Across the West Midlands 581,072 people – or 30.03 per cent of eligible voters – had their say. The turnout in the 2014 by-election had been just 10.38 per cent. There were, however, a large number of rejected ballot papers, totalling 28,346.

Counting took place in two stages after no one candidate secured more than 50 per cent of first preferences. Finishing third was UKIP's Pete Durnell with 17 per cent of first picks and fourth was Independent candidate Andy Flynn with 7.3 per cent.

Petition for more dog mess bins at Leasowes

A PETITION has been launched to install more bins at a Halesowen park after bags of dog mess have been left hanging from trees around the site.

Halesowen father Richard Aulton, aged 32, is calling on Dudley Council to install more red dog mess bins at Leasowes Park to address the issue.

Black bags filled with dog mess have been left around the sites, which Mr Aulton described as "disgusting and unsightly".

Mr Aulton said: "Leasowes Park is a lovely place to take the kids, walk the dog or just generally relax. I don't see why people would go to the effort of picking up the dog foul and then discarding it. I have found the bags hanging on gates and from trees."

"When I take my son for a walk around the park I don't want to worry that he will pick up one of these bags."

Disrespect

"We are petitioning for more red dog waste bins around the park and notices saying that people will be prosecuted if caught littering the park."

"This is their park, the place where they walk their dog, yet they treat it with total disregard and disrespect."

Halesowen South councillor David Vickers backed the call for more red bins. But he added: "The problem with red bins is they have to be somewhere that a lorry can pick them up. There are some places in the park where you could put them but these places already have those bins."

UKIP councillors now hold balance of power

DUDLEY Council looks set to be run with no party in overall control after UKIP ruled out a formal coalition with either Labour or the Conservatives.

Labour remains the biggest party on the council but was left without an overall majority after last week's dramatic elections.

It meant either party could have gained a majority with the help of UKIP's eight councillors but group leader Paul Brothwood has now said there will be no official deal.

Labour's majority was chipped away in dramatic fashion as the party lost Wollaston and Stourbridge Town by just three votes after five recounts. Tory Alan Hopwood just pipped Chris Hale.

The Gornal seat was lost by Labour's Dave Branwood to Conservative David Stanley by just 27 votes. The Belle Vale seat also went the way of the Tories by just 13 votes as Laura Taylor gained the seat previously held by Donella Russell.

Strong

Despite being the smallest party, the outcome of the elections potentially leaves UKIP in a strong position holding the balance of power – they will be able to defeat Labour policies by voting with the Tories.

Councillor Brothwood said he would be speaking with both Labour and Conservative group leaders Pete Lowe and Patrick Harley about the way forward.

But Labour has already said there would be no partnership with UKIP.

Councillor Brothwood said: "I am happy to meet with the other leaders and see what their positions are. I am sure there will be lots of discussions over the coming weeks. We hold the balance of power. We hold the balance of power."

Councillor Brothwood suggested Labour and the Tories might have to convince him why they should get UKIP's support on crucial votes but



Councillor Serena Craigie and supporters celebrating her victory, retaining the Brierley Hill seat for Labour

said there would be no 'behind closed doors or backroom deals'.

They can't force anything through without UKIP. It's early days but I think trust needs to build between the three leaders. We have made clear our agenda. It would be nice if all three parties could agree but it's very early days."

Dudley Council leader Pete Lowe said he was confident he would be able to continue running the council, despite not having an overall majority.

He said: "Our leadership of the

council remains. The council was run with no overall control in the early 2000s and that is exactly the agreement we are looking towards."

Labour could gain a majority by taking one more seat, with the Mayor of Dudley holding the casting vote.

Mandate

Mr Lowe 'categorically' ruled out any deal with UKIP and said he was confident the Conservatives would do the same.

He said: "We have a clear mandate, we are just short of a majority. I want

to sit down and have constructive discussions with sensible councillors in the interests of the people of Dudley."

The local elections across the Black Country were once again plagued by low turnouts.

Some Black Country ward turnouts dipped well below 20 per cent with many councillors claiming people are more interested in the upcoming European Union referendum.

The lowest overall turnout in the Black Country was Sandwell with 27 per cent and the highest was Dudley with 30.6 per cent.

Sir Lenny finally gets his Bafta

SIR Lenny Henry has been presented with a Bafta award in recognition of his outstanding contribution to television.

The Dudley-born comedian, actor and writer, best known for his work on Comic Relief and recently TV drama The Syndicate, was honoured with the Alan Clarke Award at the Royal Festival Hall in London on Sunday. Sir Lenny said his late mother, Winifred, would have been proud. "My mum would've been really chuffed," he said on his way to the ceremony. "I'm really looking forward to making the speech and talking about how long it's taken to get here. It's been about 42 years and I'm very, very proud to be here."

He has called for more diversity in the entertainment industry to better reflect British society.

Halfpenny Green Vineyard festival

HALFPENNY Green Vineyard, near Stourbridge, is marking English Wine Week by holding its first food and wine festival.

The free admission event is being held at the vineyard at Tom Lane, Bobbington, on Saturday, May 28, from 10.30am.

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Fraudster fleeced pop fans over gig tickets

A FRAUDSTER who fleeced music fans out of thousands of pounds by selling fake concert tickets for big-name artists – including One Direction and Lady Gaga – has been heard he faces a prison sentence.

Matthew Thompson, of Dudley, sold non-existent tickets to gigs over the internet. After paying his victims never heard from him again.

Wolverhampton Crown Court was told he was back to his old ways within weeks of receiving a suspended prison sentence in 2013.

Thompson pleaded guilty to 12 specimen charges of fraud from a list of 17. The court heard he also left fans of country star Garth Brooks and crooner Michael Bublé out of pocket.

Mr Timothy Hannam, prosecuting, described the 36-year-old, who used websites such as eBay and Gumtree, as a 'persistent' offender.

Thompson, of Tudor Vale, Upper Gornal, carried out the con between October 2013 and May 2014, making a total of £2,110. He asked the court to consider another 14 similar offences which took place between October 2013 to September 2015, making a further £2,526.

Mr Gurdeep Garcha, defending, said Thompson was 'well aware' he was going to prison having breached a 20-week jail term suspended for two years following his last court appearance in November 2013 for similar offences.

The judge adjourned the case until June 10. Thompson was granted unconditional bail.

50 Filipino nurses for Russells Hall

THE first new nurses from the Philippines are set to start working at Russells Hall Hospital this year.

Bosses revealed that 50 nurses from the Asian country will begin working at the Dudley hospital in December. They are set to be followed by more nurses recruited in the Philippines.

In March it was revealed that more than 130 nurses from the Pacific islands country would be recruited. The move came after figures revealed some shifts had been understaffed at the hospital over the past 12 months.

At a board meeting of Dudley Group NHS Foundation Trust earlier this year, it was said recruitment was planned in the Philippines and India.

Filipino nurses are also to work in Sandwell and Wolverhampton.

Homes proposed at former garage

TWENTY homes will be built on a former garage in Dudley, under plans lodged with the council. Proposals for 12 houses and eight dormer bungalows on land off Ketley Hill Road have been submitted to Dudley Council.

Improving academy praised by Ofsted



Ormiston Forge Academy pupils
Samuel Dubberley and Lauryn Bennett with Principal Andrew Burns

AN ACADEMY ordered to improve by Ofsted three years ago has driven up standards to be rated as 'good'.

Staff at Ormiston Forge Academy in Cradley Heath have been praised by inspectors after 'rapid' progress at the school, which has 1,274 students on the roll, since the last inspection.

Back in November 2013 the school was rated as 'requires improvement'.

As well as grading the academy as 'good' overall, Ofsted has also rated it 'good' in every category it was inspected – including sixth form, personal development, pupil outcomes,

quality of teaching and effectiveness of leadership and management.

Steps taken to make improvements include organising effective training for teachers that has helped them to develop and improve, regular checks on pupils' progress in lessons and providing disadvantaged students with more support.

GCSE results have improved in each of the last three years and A level students recorded 63 A* grades, with 63 per cent of students achieving five A* to C grades last year.

The report, following the inspec-

tion which took place on March 22 and 23, says: "The school has made significant improvements since the last inspection and pupils are now making good progress across a range of subjects."

Principal Andrew Burns said: "This has been a real team effort, from the students, the staff and our governors. I am so proud of my students, who are focused, resilient and positive."

"Next step – outstanding. I know how close we are to this and we are already committed to this journey."

School sued for girl's self-defence class bill

A FATHER is suing his daughter's school in Brierley Hill for the cost of self-defence classes after claims she was being bullied.

The parent, who does not want to be named, has issued a small claims court order against Thorns Community College in Brierley Hill as a way of equipping his daughter 'with the necessary skills to protect herself'. It is believed to be one of the first claims of its kind in the country.

Andy Cox, principal at the school in Stockwell Avenue, said the school has received the court notification and will be 'acting on that in due course'.

The parent, after hearing his daughter had allegedly been bullied, approached the school's head of inclusion. He then went to Mr Cox, before progressing to the chairman of governors, Dennis Hodson.

But the father claims his daughter has continued to be bullied on a daily basis, so he enrolled her onto a self-defence class and is now attempting to reclaim the costs of that from the school, which has refused to reimburse him.

Support

Now, with the backing of a recently founded parents' support group, he has turned to the courts to claim back the £57.35 cost of the classes, plus £25 court costs.

Luke, the interim chairman of Parents Against Bullying at Thorns, an anonymous group of parents, said: "This is thought to be the first case of its kind anywhere in the United Kingdom where a parent has been forced to take such drastic action due to the inability of the school's leadership to deal with a case of bullying."

"We have fully advised and supported the parent throughout the dealings he has had with the school. If the case is successful, we will be encouraging other parents whose children are being bullied to take the same action."

Mr Cox said: "The claims made by the parent stem from an issue concerning a pupil which was dealt with swiftly and appropriately by staff earlier this year."

"It is important we protect this pupil, along with all other pupils at the school, and it is for this reason we will not be going into further detail on this matter."

"We have a zero tolerance policy on all kinds of issues including bullying, verbal abuse and racism."



Partially-sighted student Shakil Akbar has won a Dudley Youth award

Youth prize for student Shakil

A STUDENT at Halesowen College has won a Dudley Youth Award for Overcoming Adversity.

Shakil Akbar, from Cradley Heath, is partially sighted and is currently studying for his Btec level three in Business. He has progressed through level one and level two study programmes and is now on track to achieve the top grade at level three.

The 21-year-old, a former pupil of St Michael's High School, is highly independent and comes to college unaided. He is also a valued member of the Student Union and has volunteered at open days.

Victoria Craske, his personal coach at the college, said: "Shakil is a pleasure to teach and an asset to the college. We are all delighted he has won this award."

"All his work has been submitted on time and his focus during the course is excellent."

Alex Griffin, student experience director, said: "We are very proud that Shakil's commitment and determination has been recognised in these prestigious awards. He is an exemplary student."

NEWS IN BRIEF

£240,000 waste revamp agreed

A £240,000 project to make improvements to a council waste depot has been given the go-ahead.

Dudley Council needs to carry out repair work to an emergency waste bunker, which is located at its Lister Road site.

The authority is required by the Environment Agency to have an area where waste can be tipped in any emergency situation.

Improvements will also be made to a storage area for road sweeping debris as part of the expenditure approved by council leader Councillor Pete Lowe.

Station parking hit during work

RESURFACING works were due to start at a train station car park this week, which will see parking spaces reduced for the next month.

Work at Stourbridge Junction station will be phased over the next four weeks, with no more than 140 spaces to be off limits at any time.

But there will then be a complete closure of the busy commuter car park over the weekend of June 11 and 12 as the work is completed.

Pedestrian access from Lutley Drive onto Brook Road car park will also be restricted on some dates.

Man hurt in 50ft fall at Kinver Edge

A MAN fell 50ft at Kinver Edge sparking a search in the dark to find him.

A police helicopter was over the beauty spot near Stourbridge using a search light and thermal imaging, while ambulance and fire crews led the hunt on the ground after the incident was reported at 9.30pm on Saturday.

A man was found unconscious and taken to hospital suffering head and chest injuries. Another person was treated for minor injuries at the scene.

MP's coffee morning to help Christian Aid

AN MP will host a charity coffee morning in Stourbridge tomorrow (Friday) in support of Christian Aid.

Stourbridge MP Margot James has organised the event which will start at 10am at St Thomas' Church Hall in Market Street.

It will include a presentation by students from Ridgewood High School about their charity work for communities in the Gambia. Coffee and tea will be served, along with a selection of soft drinks and cakes.

Pensioners' meeting

THE next meeting of Halesowen branch of the West Midlands Pensioners' Convention takes place on Thursday, May 19. It will be held in the Shenstone Theatre above Halesowen Library at 10.30am, featuring a talk on health by Michelle O'Meara. Refreshments will be served.

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AFTER a recent item on global warming, a former teacher (they never give up, do they?) says I should learn the difference between climate and weather. Please, sir, I know it already, sir. Climate is what you expect, weather is what you get.

IS it over? Can we switch on the telly or radio without being bombarded with Leicester City overkill? When this once-restrained nation of ours reaches the stage when the Daily Telegraph announces: "Leicester: the centre of the universe" and "Conquerors of the world" you know things have gone too far and the game has made a quantum leap from football to hyperball.

IN the wake of the Ken Livingstone affair, pundits have been queuing up to explain the difference between anti-zionism and anti-semitism. The first is hatred of Israeli government policy, and is okay. The second is clearly not okay. It gets complicated when anti-semitic people try to pretend they are merely anti-zionist. Two simple questions usually sort it out: Do you believe the state of Israel has a right to exist? If not, can you explain how you can contemplate something so hateful as the destruction of the Jewish homeland, without hating Jews?



I HAVE a friend whose most vivid memory of the 1962 Cuban crisis was of a 10-year-old classmate coming to school in tears because "Daddy says we'll be dead by tonight." What sort of adult says such a terrible thing in front of an impressionable child? Probably the same sort of adult who claims their kids are scared and stressed out by school SATS tests. Adults have infinite power to plant ideas in the minds of trusting children. Tell your kids the school tests are a breeze and a bit of a game and they'll look forward to them. Imprint your own prejudices on them and the kids will be worried to death.

WE may never agree on whether to stay in the EU or leave. But can we at least agree to quit the Eurovision Song Contest?

**Don't miss Peter Rhodes
every Monday to Friday in
your Express & Star**

HIGHWAYS experts are to investigate how congestion can be eased at the busy roundabout at Junction 1 of the M5, serving West Bromwich and the Black Country.

Bosses at Sandwell Council said they have recognised action is needed over the notorious traffic blackspot but say that any scheme would be 'extremely complex and challenging'.

Work to help solve the congestion issue at the busy roundabout has been mooted for years.

Sandwell's highways team revealed that several options were being looked at but that planning was still in its early stages.

There had been a suggestion highways bosses were considering building a new flyover but Sandwell Council bosses have ruled this out for the time being, saying that was not currently in their thinking.

Options

Although experts said they were assessing options for the roundabout and motorway entry, they warned a quick fix was unlikely.

That means the thousands of motorists who use the busy junction every day can expect congestion to continue for a long time to come.

Andy Miller, Sandwell Council's strategic policy manager for planning and transport, said: "We acknowledge the need to improve J1 of the M5, both to

deal with existing congestion and to accommodate future development across the borough. However, there are no current plans for a flyover.

"The council will, in partnership with Highways England – which is responsible for the motorway – be looking at what form of improvement may be feasible both technically and financially. Any future scheme at this junction will be extremely complex and challenging and will need to be very carefully considered."

West Bromwich councillor Bawa Dhalley said it was recognised by most officials in Sandwell that a solution was needed.

He said: "Something needs to be done. I have been calling for something to happen there for years.

"As for what exactly should be done, I'm not sure, that's for Highways to decide."

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Bosses say M5 junction issue is 'challenging'

Suspects sheepish after a car chase

THREE suspected sheep rustlers have ended up behind bars after a police chase which ended with officers finding three lambs in the back of a car.

The woolly back-seat passengers were spotted being driven in a Ford Galaxy along Hob Moor Road, Yardley, Birmingham, in the early hours of Tuesday. The vehicle sped off but moments later rammed into a parked car in Rosedale Road, where three men leapt from the car and fled.

POLICE are urging the public to report car cruising on the streets of the Black Country as part of a region-wide crackdown.

An injunction forbids car cruising within the Black Country and is already reducing the problem after several convictions.

It bans anyone from promoting, organising or publishing such an event.

The injunction defines car cruising as the act of drivers meeting on the public highway on an organised or impromptu basis to race or show off in their cars.

Speeding, racing or driving in convoy, performing stunts, obstructing the highway, excessive noise, and causing the risk of harm to people or property are also prohibited as acts associated with car cruising.

Chief Inspector Jed White, of West Midlands Police's motorway policing unit, said: "The injunction enables us to continue to tackle those individuals who flout the laws of the road and pose a danger. Anyone who is convicted of contempt of court by breaching the injunction could face jail or be hit with a large fine."

The injunction came into force in February 2015.

Police pressure on cruisers



Chief Inspector Jed White, of the motorway policing unit

Custody

They were all herded into a police van and are currently in police custody on suspicion of theft.

The men are all Romanian nationals, aged 22, 27 and 28.

The lambs were recovered unhurt and officers carried them out of the vehicle.

They have been temporarily re-homed on a farm in Sheldon while police make enquiries with local farmers.

Inspector Paul Southern said: "It's not every day we recover live stolen property, but the lambs seem none the worse for their adventure."

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Slow down: education moves are just too fast

AS you may probably deduce from my weekly rambblings, I am no educationalist. And I have no view one way or the other whether converting all schools into academies would be a good thing, a bad thing, or as perhaps many of us suspect, will make very little difference either way.

Given the amount of furore it has caused though, it does cross my mind that many in today's government would do well to learn from the old '80s warhorse Norman Tebbit, who argued that the key to getting radical reform accepted was to "stay one step behind public opinion", and leave the population demanding more.

Regardless of which side of the fence you sit on, it doesn't seem rocket science that slow, progressive change is usually more sustainable than these big macho policy announcements that politicians seem so fond of these days.

Still, I'm glad the plan is on hold, for the simple reason it means we will no longer have to hear the ghastly words "academise" or "academisation" for a while.

Like I said, I'm no educationalist, but I do know that academy is a noun and not a verb. Don't they teach them anything in schools these days?

□ □ □

IN the recent election for West Midlands Police and Crime Commissioner, 11,704 ballot papers were rejected because people had not given a clear intention of who they were voting for.

Now this could mean that a very significant proportion of the population are too dim to understand how to indicate who their first and second choice candidates are. Or, alternatively, it might be that there are nearly 12,000 people who are so sad that they will go to the trouble of walking or driving to a polling station for no other reason than to deliberately spoil their paper in some juvenile form of protest.

Either way, it's a rather sad indictment of society.

□ □ □

FOR all the self-important, self-indulgent rants of the luvvies, the most outrageous comment at the Bafta awards surely came from the body's own chairman Anne Morrison, who said: "The British TV industry is the envy of the world."

Has she watched any British TV in the past 10 years? X Factor, The Voice, shouty soaps, endless hours of depressing 'psychological dramas' with sweaty close-ups, muffled dialogue and tinky winky music.

I don't think I can remember a time when there was so much choice of stuff not to watch. Which probably explains why the number of TV-free homes in the UK are now at the highest level since 1972.

Envy of the world? I'm beginning to think the people we should be envying are those who don't pay £145.50 a year to watch this dross.



Paycare boss Kevin Rogers who didn't take on the role



Mr Wright paying tribute to Darren Cooper at the recently held memorial event at West Bromwich Town Hall



Albion chairman Jeremy Peace, with sporting and technical director Richard Garlick, and Adrian Wright



Ninder Johal, the previous president of the chamber

Adrian kicks off with role to help business

ROB GOLLEDGE talks to the new man at the helm of the Black Country Chamber of Commerce, Adrian Wright

ADRIAN Wright knows what his top priority is as the man at the helm of Black Country business – a PR mission to sell and celebrate the region.

As West Bromwich Albion's sales and marketing director he is used to securing deals from £2.5 million shirt sponsorships to £30,000 hospitality packages from companies all over the world.

And knowing the benefits of good PR is what he thinks he can bring as President of the Black Country Chamber of Commerce.

The 39-year-old said: "I have a real strong belief in that from a PR point of view I would be hoping to be shouting about businesses to amplify what they do and how they economically benefit the region. 'One thing I don't think we do very well is talk about the region and what our successes are. There are some exceptional businesses that are doing incredible things that no-one knows anything about.'

Relationships

"I think it is really important we amplify those opportunities so wider West Midlands, national and global media are aware of them."

He moved to the Hawthorns six years ago after a spell at Blues as head of corporate sales.

And he hopes to bring a bit of Premier League nous to the chamber.

He said: "With it being a membership body and being very media and PR driven, communication is imperative to satisfy members."

"Look at my day job which is acquiring sponsors, executive clients, box holders. They are effectively buying membership into an establishment. We offer them assets that benefit their business which is no different from the chamber. 'The wants and needs can be very different but ultimately it is about relationships, delivery and retention.'



Communication is imperative – Adrian Wright

"One thing I have instilled into people I have had the fortune to speak to at the chamber is to make sure we retain the members we have got – that is really important. I have always been schooled that it is twice as hard to recruit a new member than to maintain one."

Mr Wright has taken up the reigns replacing the popular Ninder Johal after two years.

And he also just penned a deal with the University of Wolverhampton on a sporting initiative called Pass it Forward – providing football coaching skills for young people in India.

The partnership has been set up with the Delhi Government, local football team Delhi Dynamos, Youth Football International, and the West Bromwich Albion Foundation.

The initial programme will see sports coaching practice degree students from the university's Institute of Sport travelling to Delhi with WBA Foundation coaches to provide school-



Keeping an eye on the future of steel industry

based football coaching for around 35,000 children between the ages of five and 14. And he is more than aware the impact football can have in all sorts of walks of life.

He said: "You talk to a lot of people in terms of football and it touches a lot of the community. We are a condensed area with five clubs which have been represented at a high level. Next season we are a Premier League club and I think that is something we have to capitalise on. As a local venue we communicate with our local communities, we have a lot of businesses coming in to use our facilities. Match days are a pinnacle where we have people from all over the country visiting our stadium, we connect live at the game, digitally and by the airwaves to a massive audience."

And he admits, having Wolves back in the top flight would benefit the economy. He said: "To have two Premier League clubs would be

better. While we are in the Premier League we will fly the flag for the West Midlands and ensure our region is on the map."

Mr Wright was an 11th hour replacement after Kevin Rogers, boss of Wolverhampton firm Paycare, said he could not take up the role due to work commitments.

He said: "One of the perils of being a Premier League football club is the tendency to resonate to the international market and sometimes you can lose touch with your local roots. Being born and bred Brummie, and working in the Black Country for six years it was a perfect opportunity. I threw my hat in the ring and the board unanimously backed me. I have taken on the challenge and am looking forward to it."

"Ultimately there are some internal things we need to address – what value is it adding to members, what services we are providing and what we can do for them. One thing the chamber is good at doing is keeping people aware about what is going on in business and major things, the agenda, EU referendum, Tata issues, a lot of the things the Chamber needs to have its finger on the pulse so that members and the wider business community understand what impact it will have on their business."

Meanwhile, supporting manufacturers, getting a grip on the steel crisis, and the EU referendum are the big topics.

He said: "With manufacturing being 40 per cent of the area's GDP output, it is important that our manufacturing base is not eroded and making sure they are at the cutting edge of their games. The referendum from a chamber perspective is we won't take a view backing either camp. 'On steel we are keeping a very close eye on it. There are around 150 businesses connected to the steel industry and naturally we want to ensure we are fed the correct information. As we speak it is a watching brief and we have set up a lobbying group that is trying to pull together a commercialisation deal which if no-one was to buy Tata then that the Government would come in and stabilise it until in a good enough position to be sold. Whether that happens remains to be seen but it is something we support as a Chamber. Thousands of jobs and in the supply chain depend on this industry.'

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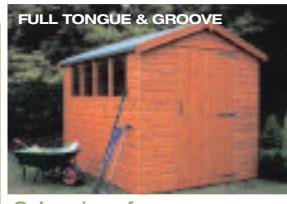
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Carers are now working within very strict rules

REGARDING carers charged over choking case - People must realise how dedicated carers must be to look after 'clients' with learning difficulties and other problems.

These carers had looked after this lad for many years. My daughter has the same problem with swallowing and is allowed to consume certain foods in the correct manner, like sitting upright at a table in the dining area.

Unaware of this affliction my wife and I cared for her for over 40 years, letting her feed herself with everyday meals. No problems.

Liverpool vindicated – truth is out at last

AT last after 27 years, the truth about Hillsborough has finally been heard.

The families can now let their loved ones rest in peace.

As a lifelong Liverpool supporter I (along with every other LFC fan) am proud of all of the families for their continuing never-ending fight and am also proud to wear the Liver Bird on my chest.

We have stood side by side at Anfield on every April 15 praying for what has happened, and I (on behalf of all LFC fans) want to thank the jury and the solicitors who have made the decision possible.

The truth was told for 27 years, now they have no choice other than to believe us.

Let's hope criminal investigations follow and those responsible are held accountable.

B KNOWLES
Dudley

Now she is in care all the rules apply regarding meals and food. When I visit I let her have her favourite snacks. If the worst happened would I be charged with manslaughter?

The rules and regulations are now so severe that experienced carers are resigning and vacancies are being slowly filled by carers who have to be trained to administer the drugs. Now we have a shortage of staff and the quality of care is becoming difficult to maintain.

A few years ago I gave my daughter her drugs as usual, not knowing my wife had also done this. Panic, an over-

dose. We rushed her to hospital and happily no harm was done. The shock and fear was punishment enough but should I have been charged?

The situation is dreadful regarding the regulations with responsible carers unable to carry out their tasks without worry because one slip and they are suspended or dismissed or even charged.

All the carers I know treat their clients like human beings or even like their own child.

L AMBROSE
Kingswinford

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

POST

Dudley Chronicle,
Chronicle Editorial,
51-53 Queen Street
Wolverhampton, WV1 1ES

EMAIL

dudley.chron@
expressandstar.co.uk

Letters should be brief and **MUST** include name, address and telephone number. The Editor reserves the right to condense letters.

Employ the young to help the elderly

FOR most older people, the major concerns are their physical wellbeing and the prospects for their children and grandchildren. The major parties don't seem to be addressing these issues.

Every winter brings a spike in the number of elderly people dying from cold, usually from pneumonia.

Many can only afford to heat one major room and often have to make a choice between staying warm and eating. The reason for this situation is that much of our housing stock is badly insulated and there is income inequality. Sweden, with a much colder climate, does not allow pensioners to die in this way.

Freak weather events such as the floods over

Christmas and New Year are happening more regularly. House owners who fall victim may find that their homes have actually been built on flood plains. Some people in the worst affected areas may find that house insurance is either unaffordable or unobtainable.

Ironically, the fuel poverty affecting older people may be the thing that will provide jobs for the younger generation. Insulating our houses, reducing heating bills and this country's carbon footprint will create many jobs.

The Green Party has been highlighting these issues and advocating this solution for many years.

R TABERNER
Tividale

Long wait to speak to doc

I PHONED my doctors' surgery on April 29 to book an appointment. I was told that I could have a phone consultation on May 25... yes, the 25th of May. Otherwise I could book an appointment in June as they had nothing in May, or I have to phone every morning to hopefully be one of the lucky ones to get an emergency appointment. Can someone please tell me how I can predict when I will be ill so I can book a couple of months in advance?

S BOTFIELD
Dudley

It's an offence

WHAT a pleasure it is to read the Chronicle as a whole and in particular Mark Andrews and Peter Rhodes. However, I must take issue with Mark.

Under Section 72 of the Highways Act 1885 it is an offence to drive on the footway in order to park or otherwise.

I feel sure a mother with a pushchair would take him to task for encouraging thoughtless drivers to obstruct footways in this manner.

HARRY A DUNN
Halesowen

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Three drug dealers are jailed after police swoop in Lozells

THREE Birmingham men have been jailed after police seized £100,000 worth of heroin, cocaine and cannabis.

The three were dealers involved in two separate operations.

Philip Reid had cannabis and cocaine valued at more than £4,000 when police stopped the 23-year-old on Oldbury Ringway during the early hours of November 3. He was heading to a meeting in West Bromwich with wraps of drugs.

He made a run for it with a rucksack packed with drugs when the officers said they intended to search the car but was caught after he fell in the car park of the nearby Sainsbury's supermarket.

Reid had hurled away bags holding drugs, weighing machines and a mobile phone, which were later recovered.

These included around £3,000 worth of 'skunk' cannabis and 62 pre-prepared street deals of cocaine with a total value of £1,240, said Mr Charles Crinon, prosecuting.

Days earlier the Ford Focus driven by Reid had been seen near an address connected to another drug ring. Although not linked, Reid appeared in the dock at Wolverhampton Crown Court alongside Akhaim Giwa, 28, and Tyrell Meikle, 27, who were involved in a £100,000 drugs haul found near the house where Giwa's girlfriend lived in Lozells. Police swooped on the address in St Silas Square on November 14, the day after Meikle was arrested by armed officers.

The event was held at Glasshouse College and was attended by more than 200 students and parents, as well as representatives of universities, including Oxford, Cambridge, Birmingham, Southampton and King's College, London.

The Conservative MP said: "I was delighted that so many local students were able to attend this evening. The idea behind my Aspirations programme is to give every student the opportunity to think ahead for the future – whether that be going to university, becoming an apprentice or training for a job."

Cocaine and heroin valued at almost £9,000 was discovered in the garden with a further £85,000 of heroin. Giwa from Quinton Road, Harborne – freed on licence seven months earlier from a jail sentence for heroin dealing – gave himself up to police a week later.

Giwa and Meikle, of Garretts Walk, Druids Heath, pleaded guilty to possession with intent to supply heroin and cocaine, were jailed for six years seven months and six years respectively.

Reid, of Salisbury Road, Lozells, admitted possession of cannabis and cocaine with intent to supply and was jailed for three years nine months.

Road chaos as deluge follows hot weather

A SWIFT change in the weather caused problems on the roads in South Staffs and the Black Country with emergency services called out to multiple crashes and cars trapped in flood water.

Following a mini-heatwave, torrential downpours battered the region on Saturday afternoon, which meant a busy few hours for firefighters.

One of the first incidents saw a car overturn on the road between Kinver and Stourbridge. The black hatchback blocked the narrow Gibbet Lane until it was recovered. An ambulance spokesperson said it was 'amazingly' fortunate that the one casualty involved was not seriously hurt.

Other incidents that evening included a car leaving the road near the Asda supermarket in Great Bridge, the red Ford Fiesta hitting road furniture in Brickhouse Lane. No-one was injured.

Walsall crews were out in force later that evening to help fish cars out of a flash flood. Fire control was 'inundated' with requests for help across that part of the Black Country but said in most cases motorists were able to drive themselves out of the water.

Nightclub's appeal hearing adjourned

A NIGHTCLUB in Dudley will have to wait to find out whether its appeal against security measures imposed by the council will be successful.

Strict measures were imposed on Rock Zombie at the request of police in March which banned new customers from entering the venue after 1am and stipulated that six door staff had to be on duty at all times. This followed a series of incidents at the King Street venue.

The appeal hearing was due to be heard at Dudley Magistrates Court on Thursday but was adjourned until Thursday, May 26.

Council cuts mean Bloom plans wither



Happier times – Stourbridge in Bloom co-ordinator David Harcourt when the town won a gold award two years ago

STOURBRIDGE in Bloom is being cancelled this year due to Dudley Council cutbacks.

The town's scheme has won eight consecutive gold awards but organiser David Harcourt has had to take the unprecedented step of cancelling the popular community endeavour.

Councillor Christine Perks, said: "David did not want to do anything half heartedly. If they were going to go into it then they wanted to do it properly so they will give it a break this year."

"Previously Stourbridge in Bloom had a lot of support from the council but because of all the cutbacks it has lessened. It is incredibly difficult to do without more support. The good news is that they will still be doing something flower orientated I think but just not under 'In Bloom'."

Councillor Perks said that Ambleside in Bloom would be going ahead. She formed a Friends of Ambleside team to take that initiative forward last year. She continued: "We have a lot of ideas going and aim to get more people involved."

Dudley Council had funded hanging baskets and large planters to aid Stourbridge in Bloom in the past. But now the authority is looking to save £25,000 from its 'In Bloom' budget across the borough, and is instead offering help to find alternative funding.

It is thought that around £12,000 would need to be sourced to cover the costs of planting and watering if Stourbridge were to re-enter the In Bloom campaign.

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I thought wife blamed me over our girls' deaths

A BLACK Country businessman whose teenage daughters were killed in the Hillsborough disaster feared that his former wife blamed him for failing to look after them properly.

Trevor Hicks, the former managing director of Perma Systems in Kingswinford, and his ex-wife Jenni returned together to the scene of the 1989 tragedy at Sheffield Wednesday's ground, in which 96 Liverpool fans died.

Their visit to the stadium, for the first time in 25 years, can now be revealed following the conclusion of the two-year-long inquests which found that the Liverpool fans were unlawfully killed.

During a BBC documentary, standing with Jenni near the spot where their teenaged daughters Sarah and Vicki had lain on the turf, Trevor said: "I always thought Jenni blamed me for not looking after them properly."

Jenni replied: "It's never even entered my head to have blamed you. I never, ever have and still don't."

Talked

Jenni said: "The last time we were at that ground together was obviously the day of the Hillsborough disaster.

"As a couple we never talked about our own experiences because our group (Hillsborough Family Support Group) was formed very, very quickly and I guess we were into the 96, and it's not deemed appropriate just to talk about your own experiences.

"Then we split up a couple of years later. Sadly, our marriage broke down because of all the stresses and strains of it. So you never really had the opportunity to talk about it in such great detail and that's what going back together did. To have Trevor take me



Victoria Hicks died at the football match



Sarah Hicks died at Hillsborough



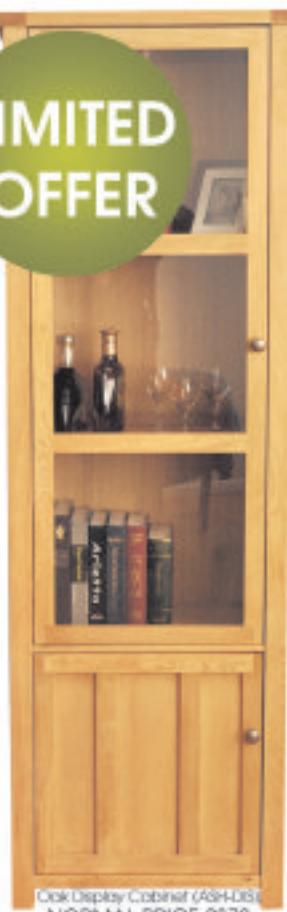
Trevor Hicks at St George's Hall, Liverpool, where there is a candle for each victim around and show me approximately where he was standing on the day, his movements, where the girls were, it really completed a picture for me. I could see it must have been cathartic for him as well."

Sarah, 19, and Vicki, 15, were crushed in the Leppings Lane end at the Hillsborough ground. They had arrived with both parents but the family

split up before the start of the FA Cup semi-final between Liverpool and Nottingham Forest. Jenni had a ticket for a seat in the North stand, while Trevor and the girls had tickets for the standing area.

Trevor said: "They were both bright girls with a lot in front of them. We didn't just lose the girls we lost ourselves."

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storm



Bullring owners hailing the success of LinkStreet

BULLRING owner Hammerson has hailed the success of its new LinkStreet mall in Birmingham, which connects the city's two major shopping centres.

A string of urban fashion and lifestyle brands such as Liam Gallagher's Pretty Green, Trapstar and Vincent Van Doodle are all signed up for the newly-refurbished mall, which links the Bullring to Grand Central.

Hammerson, which owns and runs the Bullring, is currently buying newly-opened Grand Central above New Street rail station for £335 million.

And it is using LinkStreet as a hub for up-and-coming brands and pop-up stores, inspired by London's Seven Dials and Carnaby Street, which offer a mix of independent shops, restaurants and cafes.

Five of the UK's leading new retailers – Trapstar, Ratchet, Vincent Van Doodle, DA Clothing and Major London 05 – launched in LinkStreet in new pop-up units. Sarah Mander, assistant director for retail leasing at Hammerson, said: "LinkStreet is now well-placed to deliver a fresh and very different type of retail experience."

Charity in warning on Right to Buy sell-off

A CHARITY has warned that more than 300 council homes in Dudley could be sold off to help fund the Government's Right to Buy extension scheme – despite long waiting lists for properties.

Homeless charity Shelter estimates that a total of 1,239 properties across the region (including Staffordshire) could be sold on the open market once vacant.

But housing bosses in Dudley say it is too early to know how Right to Buy extension scheme will affect the borough.

Shelter estimates that a total of 338 social housing properties would have to go on the market once they become vacant to fund the scheme.

The money raised through the sale of 'high value' homes could then be used to fund discounts of up to £100,000 for housing association tenants taking up the Right to Buy offer.

Confirmation

But Dudley Council said it was still awaiting confirmation from the Government and it was not yet known how the scheme will be implemented.

Alan Lunt, strategic director for the place directorate at Dudley Council, said: "While we note the figures released by Shelter around the proposed impact of the Government's right to buy policy, their report is based

Bevan to expand into a new base

AN Halesowen-based transport services company is preparing to crown its 40th year by moving to a new headquarters after a £500,000 refit.

The Bevan Group has grown to employ more than 300 people, 180 of them across its head office in Halesowen and at a second base in Oldbury.

Now it is expanding into a new base in Wednesbury, with a 17,000 sq ft factory and 5,000 sq ft of offices, after the £500,000 refurbishment due for completion this summer.

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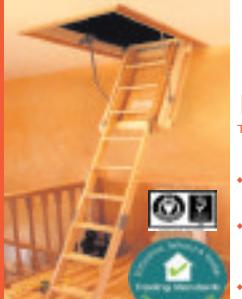
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12 Bright spark but husband feels the heat



Husband James Clarke braves the heat at Baggeridge for this stunning image by his photographer wife Steph

IT looks like a scene fresh out of an action movie — where a dramatic sea of fire reigns down on a dark figure.

But this epic shot was taken by a Black Country photographic club member with the help of some clever camera trickery.

Photographer Steph Clarke, co-founder of Wednesfield Photographic Club, took it when he was out at Baggeridge Country Park on a Thursday evening. It shows her husband, James, dressed from head-to-toe and holding an umbrella, engulfed with burning

wire wool that is being dropped from a disused railway bridge above.

Steph used the technique of an exposure to capture the scene, where the photograph was taken over four seconds.

Steph, 35, from Wednesfield, said: "We made the effects of the photograph where a member of our group stood on the bridge above and dropped burning wire wool over him. We took safety precautions although some of the wire managed to burn through his clothes and umbrella.

"He was wearing warm gloves and clothing and tried to cover as much flesh as possible. The burning wool looks incredible, it gives the effect that there are a lot more flames and sparks than there actually is. It is safe as long as there isn't any naked skin and the ground is wet."

Steph took the photograph with her Nikon D7000, a 'mid-range DSLR camera', whilst out on a trip with her group. The club, which now has more than 100 members, is celebrating its one year anniversary.

Martineau Gardens are talk topic

Clent Gardening Club

THE April meeting welcomed Caroline Hutton from the Martineau Gardens in Edgbaston, Birmingham who gave a talk on the work of this therapeutic garden.

The gardens comprise a 2.5 acre oasis in the heart of suburban Birmingham and is located opposite the Priory Hospital. Caroline advised that the gardens often provided a place for solace and quiet contemplation for people visiting relatives in the Priory and, despite the lack of a shop or café, there was always someone on hand to provide a welcome cup of tea.

Without the aid of photographs Caroline proceeded to provide a highly descriptive vision of the gardens, taking her audience through each section of the garden in stages.

The garden is unfunded and entirely staffed by volunteers and all visitors are welcome. The garden particularly works with handicapped children who can experience flowers and vegetables by taste, smell and touch.

An excellent talk was well received. Caroline was thanked by Nina Hatch's vote of thanks after which the chairman drew the raffle and announced the results of the monthly competitions.

He reminded members that the next monthly meeting was the annual joint meeting with Belbroughton Horticultural Society with Philip Aubrey hosting a "Gardener's Question Time" hosted by Clent.

May this month be just as successful



A feast of cakes baked for a stall to celebrate St George's Day

Gornal Wood TWG

WHAT a busy time it was for Gornal Wood Townswomen's Guild during April.

On the 20th, the club held its monthly meeting where everyone had a go at rag ruggning. They were given a great demonstration by the lovely Pam Favil. More than 55 ladies were in attendance once again.

The following day, the ladies celebrated the Queen's 90th Birthday with afternoon tea served in the Zoar Chapel. Lots of tea and cakes were consumed by 60 ladies.

On April 23, the guild held a cake stall at

the St George's Day celebrations in Gornal village. Once again, they sold out of all the beautiful cakes the ladies baked.

The club now hopes May will be just as successful. On the 18th, there will be a talk on remedies by Kath Reynolds in the Darby and Joan Club, Abbey Street from 10am to noon.



Ladies enjoy trying their hand at rag-ruggning at the April 20 meeting

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Mayor's big night out boosts his five charities

THE outgoing Mayor of Dudley, Councillor Steve Walther, put on his dancing shoes at the grand fundraising finale to his civic year.

Councillor Walther and his wife Jane arranged the event at The Venue in Dudley on Saturday night to thank people for their support over the past 12 months.

Around £50,000 has been raised for the Mayor's five charities during his year as the borough's first citizen.

Anthem

Black Country comedy outfit the Fizzogs performed at the event and there was music from The Empty Can, the band behind the Black Country's official anthem. Singers Chris Passay and Richie Ray also took to the stage at the event.

The Mayoress put her husband,

along with Labour group leader Pete Lowe and Councillor Melvyn Mottram through their paces in a special 'Mayor Does Strictly' dance contest.

Councillor Walther said: "We wanted to thank all the people who have helped us out through the year. It was better than we could have ever expected."

The evening was fantastic, the atmosphere was something to savour and everyone said what a marvellous night it was."

He added: "We think we are close to, or just over, £50,000 which I think will be a record. It's been a phenomenal year."

The Mayor's five charities are The Hope Centre, The What? Centre, More Mascots Please, Leukaemia Unit Appeal Fund, Russells Hall and The West Midlands Lupus Group.



Mayor Councillor Steve Walther dances with Sarah Attwood watched by comedy troupe the Fizzogs

Prison for killer driver who fled crash scene

A SPEEDING driver who fled the scene after killing a pedestrian by careering on to the pavement had been jailed for nearly five years.

Jordan Edwards was doing 73mph in a 30 limit when he lost control approaching the T-junction of Marriott Road and Cradley Road, Netherton, on November 7 last year, Wolverhampton Crown Court was told last week.

The black Seat Ibiza with the 22-year-old at the wheel failed to make an intended right turn, hurtling across the main road and ploughing into Netherton man Gary Wroblewski, a tanker driver who was walking home from the pub.

The 53-year-old was killed almost immediately by the impact, said Mr David Bennett, prosecuting.

Edwards, who did not have a full driving licence but had several previous convictions for motoring offences, made no attempt to help the dying man.

Embedded

He and another person were seen on CCTV running away down Marriott Road with the ignition key seconds after the smash, leaving the Seat Ibiza embedded in a roadside billboard.

The DNA of Edwards was found on an airbag in the vehicle and a cap discovered in a foot well. Traces of his blood had also been discovered on the inside of the windscreen, continued Mr Bennett.

The defendant - who owned the car - finally gave himself up to police in Brierley Hill on February 22, after being on the run for almost four months.

He admitted panicking and acting "like a coward" the court was told.

Mr Gurdeep Garcha, defending, declared: "This was a short piece of bad driving at grossly excessive speed."

"He is mortified by what he has done."



Jordan Edwards - jailed

Edwards, from Terry Street, Dudley, admitted causing death by dangerous driving and was jailed for four years and nine months.

Judge Kristina Montgomery QC, told him: "Approaching the T junction at 73mph, either you could not stop in time to look out into the junction or you had no intention of coming to a halt, taking the corner without stopping. The Seat veered across the entire carriageway, killing Mr Wroblewski."

"You had to be traced and did not come forward until many months later when you realised the police were unlikely to cease their search for you."

"You presented yourself to them but initially blamed the condition of your vehicle for what happened. The only fault that night was with your driving."

Edwards was also banned from driving for six years and will have to pass an extended test before receiving a driving licence.

"He is mortified by what he has done."

Classes for active OAPs

NEW exercise classes for senior citizens will be taking place across the Dudley borough.

Participants in the Active Seniors will be taught by qualified specialists.

Classes will be held in Halesowen, Kingswinford, Sedgley, Hagley and Brierley Hill. For more information or a free taster session call Kim or Angela on 07512 546480.

Unemployed can get On Track now

FORTY long-term unemployed young people will benefit from a new £750,000 scheme being run by Barnardo's in Halesowen.

Through the On Track programme, they will receive up to six months of one-to-one coaching, helping them develop the skills they need to get into work, training or education.

Santander bank is providing funding of £750,000 for the programme as part of its three-year partnership with the charity which is based at Great Cornbow in Halesowen.

The project aims to build up young people's confidence, develop leadership skills and boost motivation, through activities such as DIY skills workshops along with CV writing workshops and interview tips.

Barnardo's chief executive Javed Khan, said: "Too often marginalised young people fall behind in the race to get a job. With the support of Santander, On Track will help those with the least opportunities get ahead."



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Dangerous paedophile on the run is given 20-year sentence

A DANGEROUS paedophile from Birmingham is on the run after being sentenced to 20 years in prison for raping two children.

José Manico, aged 44, of Templefield Square, Edgbaston, fled the country before he could face trial over the string of offences against a six-year-old girl in London and a boy of the same age in Birmingham a decade later.

The pervert, who lived in Wolverhampton at the time of the London attacks, was described by a judge as a 'dangerous offender' who continued to pose a risk to children.



Jose Manico – raped children

Passing sentence in Manico's absence, Judge Mark Wall QC said: "I have no doubt he must be treated as a dangerous offender. He committed these offences at different points in his life separated by a great deal of time. There is a significant risk he will continue to offend in this way into the future."

Depraved Manico targeted his first victim in London over an 18-month period between February 2003 and August 2004. He subjected the girl, then aged between six and eight, to five sexual assaults and four rapes.

Four years later the girl, who cannot be named for legal reasons, told police about the assaults but no charges were brought against Manico. Now aged 20, she made a fresh complaint to police last year.

In August 2014, by that time living in Birmingham with a wife and children of his own, Manico targeted a young boy he was babysitting, committing two sexual assaults and one rape over a weekend. Manico threatened to throw his terrified victim from a window if he told of the abuse. It was only months later the boy told his mother and police were informed.

Before going on the run, Manico denied the accusations saying both victims had made up the stories. But following a trial in his absence at Birmingham Crown Court, a jury found him guilty of five counts of rape, six of sexual assault and one of indecent assault. Sentencing Manico to 20 years in prison with an extended licence period, Judge Wall said there was no mitigation for the offences against vulnerable children.

More display space at glass museum



An artist's impression of the British Glass Foundation's new £5.5m glass museum at the White House Cone in Wordsley

A NEW glass museum to open in Wordsley this summer is to be larger than originally planned.

Bosses at the £5.5 million White House Cone Museum of Glass have decided to use an extra 600sq m of space as part of the venue rather than renting it out as planned.

They had a change of heart after deciding they wanted the room to be part

of the attraction and are now asking for ideas on how to use it. A range of options are being considered, including interactive facilities for families.

The famous Stourbridge Glass Collection is being moved to the new centre, which is nearing completion.

The display area is now three times larger than where the collection was at Broadfield House in Kingswinford.

Graham Knowles, chairman of the British Glass Foundation, said the organisation was open to a range of options for the additional space. He also admitted that the revenue lost by not renting the area out will have to be made up elsewhere.

He said: "The overwhelming preference is to take on more space for glass-related activities."

Canal work on locks and brick walls

REPAIRS are to be made along a stretch of the Walsall Canal in West Bromwich as part of a programme of works to bring it back up to scratch.

A historic lock will be revamped while brickwork will also be touched up along the towpath. The area off Ryding Green Road is badly in need of repair, with the parts of the lock degrading and brickwork on the towpath crumbling.

The Canal and River Trust has revealed plans to start improvements to help protect the canalise. It says 'essential repairs' are needed to 'safeguard the historic fabric of the listed lock. It said it was also important for new brickwork to be laid to prevent other bricks from being ripped out by vandals, as anti-social behaviour was rife in the area.

The series of locks that run alongside the canal date back to the mid-18th century.

The Trust said that a section of wall would need to be completely rebuilt as part of the project. The works would also include towpath side coping and repairs to lockside brick sheeting.

The historic lock has become worn over the years with metal beginning to rust. Part of the brickwork is also missing.

A Trust said: "The repair works proposed form part of a continuous programme of maintenance."

Arena naming rights are now up for grabs

THE NEC Group is searching for a new naming rights partner for Birmingham's Barclaycard Arena, formerly the National Indoor Arena, following the conclusion of a five-year partnership. The city centre venue was relaunched in 2014 following a £26 million revamp.

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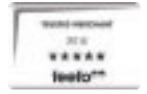
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Teams are needed for tournament

A CHARITY five-a-side football tournament will be taking place in Blackheath next month.

The matches will be played at Goals, Cakemore Road, on Sunday, June 19. It has been organised by brothers Gurcharan and Herjinder Bhujharry.

Children's and adult teams are being invited to take part and money raised will go to the charity CLIC Sargent, which supports children with cancer.

The tournament will be held in a traditional group format and then as a knockout, where all teams will be guaranteed at least one hour's play.

Details of teams must be submitted to Goals by Friday, June 17.

Adult teams will cost £70 to enter while the price is £25 for teams made up of children. Call 07762521584.

Talk on Zep bomb attack

BLACKHEATH Townswomen's Guild will hear about the night the kaiser bombed the Black Country at its next talk.

Historian Ian Bott will be speaking about the Zepelin bombings during the First World War in his talk on May 25.

The guild meets at Central Methodist Church, High Street, Blackheath, every fourth Wednesday of the month at 10.30am. Contact Carole Potter on 0121 421 2200.

FOCUS ON BLACKHEATH AND ROWLEY REGIS

Prolific offender jailed after car hits police officer

A DRIVER who has never had a licence hit a police officer with a glancing blow while speeding away from a petrol station in Blackheath.

Dylan Coffin panicked after recognising Pc Aaron Pugh when an unmarked police car had tried to block him at Sainsbury's supermarket fuel station in Blackheath.

The 22-year-old, a prolific offender, from Oldbury, accelerated from the petrol pump where a friend was filling up the Seat Leon which police had been hunting after it failed to stop when requested, Wolverhampton Crown Court heard.

The car hit the open driver's door and left Pc Pugh with a back injury that kept him off work for eight weeks, said Mr Nicholas Smith, prosecuting.

The injured officer had dealt with him days earlier and Coffin was heard to shout 'It's Pugh' before driving off leaving the other man with a petrol pump nozzle in his hand.

Mr Tim Talbot-Webb, defending, said: "He is a man who likes cars even though he doesn't have a proper licence."

Coffin, of Crusader Close, who had 15 previous convictions, pleaded guilty to assault, driving dangerously and damaging an unmarked police car. He was jailed for 15 months and banned from driving for a year.

By John Scott

spotted him speeding on Sedgley Road West, Tipton. Coffin accelerated to 70mph in a 30mph area, ran a red light and went down a one-way street the wrong way. Other motorists were forced to take evasive action as the Passat headed for Oldbury Ring Road, where it squeezed between two buses, damaging both.

The vehicle careered onto the pavement and hit a police car before coming to a standstill.

Mr Tim Talbot-Webb, defending, said: "He is a man who likes cars even though he doesn't have a proper licence."

Coffin, of Crusader Close, who had 15 previous convictions, pleaded guilty to assault, driving dangerously and damaging an unmarked police car. He was jailed for 15 months and banned from driving for a year.



New express library service run by volunteers at Portway Lifestyle Centre in Oldbury

Chance to read at your leisure

AN express library has been opened at a Sandwell leisure centre serving Rowley Regis and Blackheath in a joint venture for visitors to access books in a quick and convenient way.

The service will be available at Portway Lifestyle Centre in Oldbury and is run in partnership with Sandwell Council Library Service and Sandwell Leisure Trust.

The Express Library offers visitors the opportunity to borrow library books, magazines and other resources in a quick, easy and convenient way.

The service opened on Friday and will see two fully stocked bookcases available to community borrowers twice a week, on Monday between 2-4pm and Friday from 10.30am to 12.30pm.

Everything is free to borrow with members simply needing to register with the service, which is staffed by community volunteers.

Third gold success for school

THE Westminster School in Rowley Regis has won a gold health and safety award for the third year running.

The school will be presented with the award during the RoSPA Occupational Health and Safety Awards ceremony at the Hilton Birmingham Metropole hotel on July 14.

The RoSPA Awards celebrates 60 years of presenting accolades to organisations which have shown commitment to accident prevention.

Headteacher Christine Hill said "I am delighted that we have received this prestigious gold award for the third consecutive year. The support of both staff and pupils has been key to our success in achieving this recognition".

Awards go to the best entries in 24 industry sectors including construction, healthcare, transport and logistics, engineering, manufacturing and education.

Zigzag safety

ROAD markings have been placed outside a Rowley Regis school following a safety campaign.

Sandwell Council has placed zigzag markings outside Springfield Primary School to prevent parking by the school entrance.

Choral service

ST Paul's Church in Long Lane, Blackheath, is anticipating a large congregation this Sunday for its choral evensong service at 6.30pm.

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AJS testers outside a pub at Woodhall Spa



AJS motorcycle in Black Country Living Museum



AJS tester on the London Road in Lincolnshire

Testing time as Great Depression took its toll

SEVENTY five years ago A J Stevens & Co folded, one of the most illustrious names in Wolverhampton's long engineering history.

The company had been founded by the Stevens Brothers, George, Harry, Jack and Joe jr.

They had all started out working for their father's company, making parts for locks, bicycles and other products.

Expand

But in 1899 an American petrol engine was bought for the works, and Harry quickly decided that he could make something better himself, and he did.

Stevens Bros engines were soon in demand for motor-cycle manufacturers like Clyno, and in 1909 the brothers set up on their own in Retreat Street, making motor-cycles, financed by the money Harry received for designing

MEMORY LANE

BY Alec Brew

the first Sunbeam motor-cycle. In 1914 the operation became a public company and they chose the name AJS, Jack's initials, he being the only brother with two Christian names.

They soon needed to expand and bought the Graiseley Hill Estate just over the road, where a large factory sprang up. They encouraged Clyno to move from Northampton into the old Retreat Street property.

AJS motor-cycles became regular TT winners on the Isle of Man and the company prospered, as many as 600 bikes being built every week.

They diversified into making radios, the wireless factory being in Lower Walsall Street, and then Charles Hayward (Sir Jack's dad) secured contracts for them to build the bodies for

Clyno cars, which were now in production in Pelham Street.

Soon AJS were making their own cars and light commercial vehicles, but the Great Depression was to have a devastating effect on the company.

The wireless business, which had moved to Stewart Street was the first to go, and then, in 1931, the company closed, though all creditors were paid up.

Invest

The AJS name was bought by Matchless Motor-cycles, and the Stevens Bros carried on making light vans for a while, but the roar of AJS testers setting off down the Penn Road was no longer heard.

Charles Hayward who had set up the Electric & General Engineering Trust to invest in engineering companies, and had bought the aircraft department from Boulton & Paul Ltd of Norwich, insisted that the new company, to be named Boulton Paul Aircraft, build its new factory in Wolverhampton, because he so regretted the loss of jobs caused by the folding of his erstwhile employer, AJS.



AJS testers on Penn Common



AJS car in the Black Country Living Museum

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Anniversary celebrations at Merry Hill

AS property developer intu celebrates its second anniversary since taking over Merry Hill shopping centre, bosses at the site have spoke of their vision and excitement for the future.

In May 2014 the Briery Hill complex was taken over in a deal worth £407.7 million and rebranded as 'intu Merry Hill' as intu jointly own the site with Australian investors QIC. Since then the shopping centre has seen a revamp and won national awards.

Robert Pickersgill, Marketing Manager at intu Merry Hill, said: "We are excited for the future. We are seeing increasing number of shoppers through the doors and our visitors have feedback that they like the improvements we have already made."

The revamp has seen the three-storey 'purple car park' receive a British Car Park award.

Liz Taylor, General Manager at intu Merry Hill, said: "The inside looks amazing. We want retailers to bring their businesses to us."

A new larger Top Shop store has opened, free wi-fi is widely available and a new 'chill-out' area features a reading tree on the ground floor. Stores are now open until 9pm each weekday.

Bosses are in discussions with WH Smith over its store after a notice appeared announcing its closure on June 8 after almost 30 years at the centre.

Peaky time viewing for Black Country dialect

REPRESENTATIVES of the Black Country Festival were invited to the BBC in London when The One Show marked the return of West Midland gangster drama Peaky Blinders.

Steve Edwards, Dave Brownhill and James Stevens, frontman of Black Country Anthem band The Empty Can, appeared on The One Show last week to demonstrate Black Country dialect. The period thriller was filmed at the Black Country Living Museum.

Legal high drug deaths more than treble over two years

'Glory to Allah' adverts in Arabic on buses



'Subhan Allah', which means 'glory be to God', is already appearing on London buses for Ramadan

WEST Midlands buses will soon be emblazoned with Arabic phrases praising Allah, in an initiative by Birmingham charity Islamic Relief.

Posters on the side of buses in the region will carry the words 'Subhan Allah', which translates to 'glory be to God', in a bid to raise funds for victims of war and natural disasters.

It is part of an advertising campaign that will appear nationwide, particularly in London, Birmingham, Manchester, Leicester and Bradford. The scheme is set to run from May 23,

although the slogan has already appeared across London on the capital's iconic red double-deckers.

It will campaign to coincide with Ramadan, when Muslims traditionally fast and donate to charity.

Imran Madden, UK Director of Islamic Relief, said: "In a sense this could be called a climate change campaign because we want to change the negative climate around international aid and around the Muslim community in this country.

"International aid has helped halve

the number of people living in extreme poverty in the past 15 years, and British Muslims are an incredibly generous community who give over £100 million to international aid charities in Ramadan.

"The Cakes for Syria initiative is a great example of what our organisation is about – over a thousand young volunteers selling and delivering cakes at a time when they are spending long days fasting, because they want to make a positive difference for those affected by the Syrian conflict."

DEATHS linked to so-called 'legal highs' more than tripled in two years, an official report has found.

Experts said the number has increased over a 10-year period from 2004 with a total of 76 recorded during that time in England and Wales. There was a "marked" rise between 2011 and 2013 when cases jumped from seven to 23.

A BBC TV documentary recently focussed on concerns over a legal high called Black Mamba, highlighting the problem in Wolverhampton.

Analysis by the Office for National Statistics (ONS) – which comes as the Government prepares to introduce a crackdown on the drugs – found that men in their 20s were most at risk.

Its study said the average age for deaths involving legal highs is 28, 10 years younger than the average for illegal drugs. Nine teenagers have died taking legal highs between 2004 and 2013.

Vanessa Fearn, researcher at the ONS, said: "Some people think that because these drugs are or were legal until recently, they are safe. Forensic testing has shown that a single tablet or powder can contain a mixture of different substances, even 'traditional' illegal drugs, which may explain why the majority of deaths involving legal highs involved more than one drug."

The number of deaths involving legal highs remains 'very small' compared with those linked to illegal drugs. In the same 10 year period there were more than 100 times as many deaths involving heroin/morphine (7,748) and more than 20 times as many involving cocaine (1,752).

Legal highs – officially referred to as 'new psychoactive substances' – contain substances which mimic the effects of illegal drugs like cocaine, cannabis and ecstasy.

A blanket ban on production, distribution, sale and supply of new psychoactive substances is on the way.

MP hits out over pledge on taskforce

AN MP has accused the Government of reneging on its promise to set up a taskforce to support workers affected by the proposed closure of British Gas's Oldbury offices.

The Swallowfield One site has been earmarked for closure by the energy giant to cut costs, a move which could see 680 jobs go.

Following the announcement the Prime Minister told the Commons that a ministerial taskforce would be set up to enter discussions with the company.

But Labour Warley MP, John Spellar said the taskforce would be made up of members of Sandwell Council, Dudley Council and the Black Country Local Enterprise Partnership, with ministers playing 'little more than a background role'.

He said: "I do not think that that matches up to the assurance from the Prime Minister. I am writing to Sajid Javid to raise my concerns. They need to put a lot more energy into this."

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Bats could delay Hippodrome demise

THE demolition of Dudley Hippodrome is being delayed by the possible presence of bats inside the building.

Dudley Council bosses say a bat survey will need to be carried out before any work to knock down the Hippodrome could begin.

It comes as the town's regeneration boss warned that the current rescue plan to save the Castle Hill former theatre was likely to be the last chance.

He added that demolition work would start 'very shortly' if the takeover package was not deemed viable.

The council wants to replace the venue, which has hosted stars including Laurel and Hardy, Gracie Fields and George Formby, with a landscaped open public space. It was last used as a theatre more than 40 years ago, became a bingo hall and in recent years has been unused.

The Friends of Dudley Hippodrome aim to take over the iconic venue and re-open it as a theatre. Up to £8 million would be needed.

Councillor Khurshid Ahmed, head of planning and regeneration at Dudley Council, said: "An issue has come



Mini owner Natasha Price, 27, with friend Jess Howard, 21, of Stourport and Wyre Forest Minis & Metros club

Mini heatwave brings out the car enthusiasts

HUNDREDS of Minis sparked in the sunshine during a celebration of the iconic British car at Himley Hall.

Collectors brought out their classic Minis along with the newer generation of the vehicle which for decades was made in Longbridge, Birmingham.

Cars were judged in 11 different categories, while for the first time ever a Generation One Mini – a newer model – was crowned best in the Premier Concours competition.

Mansion

People came from all over the country to show off their Minis and a celebration of the 15th anniversary of the Generation One Mini also featured as part of the show, which brought hordes of motor enthusiasts to the mansion and its grounds near

Dudley. The cars dated from 1959 to the present day.

David Hollis, of the British Mini Club, which has hosted the event at Himley Hall for 24 years, said: "It was the first time it has been held in stunning weather."

"Everybody was relaxed and having picnics – and the standard of cars was phenomenal."

This distinctive two-door car was designed by Sir Alec Issigonis and first rolled off the production line at Longbridge in 1959.

In the decade that followed the Mini gained a youthful image and became synonymous with the swinging '60s in Britain, especially after a fleet of Mini Coopers featured in 1969 Michael Caine movie The Italian Job.

Ban on way for zombie knives, says politician

ZOMBIE knives will be banned in the UK by the end of the year, the Shadow Policing Minister says.

Jack Dromey said he was confident the deadly weapons would no longer be able to end up in the hands of young people — as he praised The Chronicle's sister newspaper the Express & Star for its campaign on the issue.

The blades, which can be up to 2ft in length, be serrated and have names such as Head Splitter, Death Dagger and Decapitator have been bought online, with the Government now set to rush through legislation banning their sale, manufacture of importation.

The ease in availability of 'zombie knives' was highlighted by the Express & Star and The Chronicle last year, prompting the region's Police and Crime Commissioner David Jamieson to launch a campaign to ban the blades.



Jack Dromey MP

of being able to buy a knife that can kill on the internet without any age checks.

"The ban on zombie knives I am confident will be in place by the end of this year. The ban on buying knives on the internet more generally might take us into 2017. I am confident it's a battle we can win."

Mr Dromey referred to the death of schoolboy Bailey Gwynne in Aberdeen last year as an example of why action on knives was so important. He was stabbed by a 16-year-old at school with a knife bought online.

Mr Dromey said: "Young people should be able to walk on the streets of the Black Country and feel safe."

"Knives that can kill should have no place on our streets."

"I am absolutely determined this is a battle that must be won."

Police and Crime Commissioner David Jamieson also praised the role of the press in raising awareness of zombie knives.

Fridges are dumped

FLY-TIPPERS have dumped multiple fridges at two different locations in the Black Country.

Four fridges were dumped at Foxcote Lane, in Cradley, while another four were dumped at Pedmore Lane, Stourbridge. Halesowen South Councillor David Vickers has contacted both Dudley Council and Worcestershire County Council and asked them to remove the appliances.

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X Factor star has colourful story to tell
See Page 23



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Antony Costa – Page 23

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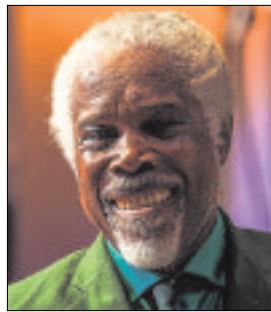
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King Lear

Thu at 7.30pm,
Birmingham Repertory Theatre,
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Check out full listings in **the ticket** in Friday's Express & Star

Dreamcoat Joe – boy now beefcake

"IT'S sometimes hard to say no to a burger", admits X Factor winner Joe McElderry, who looks in great shape for his starring role in Joseph and the Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat.

Well if you're going to be stripping down to a loincloth every night a buff body is surely a prerequisite?

Although he posed topless for Gay Times Magazine earlier this year, revealing his toned torso in front of a packed audience was never on Joe's bucket list.

"It's something that takes a bit of getting used to," laughs the singer.

"I certainly didn't imagine I would be taking my top off in front of a theatre full of people each night."

Little Joe McElderry, who stole hearts when he won X Factor in 2009, has transformed from boy to beefcake. The sweet-faced 18-year-old is now 24 and looking every inch the chiselled heartthrob.

To prepare for his lead part in Joseph, which visits Wolverhampton Grand Theatre next week, Joe really upped the ante in the gym.

"I exercise on a daily basis anyway but I made my workouts a bit harder, a bit tougher. I love exercising, I find it really addictive," he says.

Joseph is the star's first major theatrical role and he's been getting rave reviews. That colourful coat has been donned previously by Jason Donovan, Donny Osmond, Lee Mead and Phillip Schofield, so how has Joe made the character his own?

"Well we all have very different



A buff Joe McElderry plays the Biblical Joseph in Rice and Lloyd Webber's musical

voices. I really wanted to make it my own. I suppose I bring a kind of pop element to it. When you're doing a concert you build on the audience reaction and participation but with something like Joseph you are playing a character. You can't break out of that, it's stricter but very enjoyable."

We're going to be seeing a lot of Joe in Wolverhampton. As well as Joseph, from Tuesday to Saturday, he will be starring as Aladdin in the Grand's panto. "I can't get enough of Wolverhampton this year," he chortles.

For tickets call 01902 429212 or see www.grandtheatre.co.uk



'A great jukebox feel-good show'

Last dance for Antony

ANOTHER member of the chart-topping group Blue has made the transition from pop singer to musical theatre actor.

Blue star Duncan James was on stage in Wolverhampton last week, cavorting with drag queens in Priscilla Queen of the Desert at the Grand – and now band mate Antony Costa will be on the boards in Birmingham in theatre mogul Bill Kenwright's latest show celebrating the sounds of the 1960s.

Save The Last Dance For Me has been written by Birds Of A Feather duo Laurence Marks and Maurice Gran and features songs penned by the team of Doc Pomus and Mort Schuman, including A Teenager in Love, Can't Get Used to Losing You, His Latest Flame and Suspicion. It tells the story of two sisters on holiday during the summer of '63 who encounter romance at an American air force base dance hall.

Antony, who previously appeared in Blood Brothers and Boogie Nights, plays airman Milton. He says: "I got involved with the show because I really loved the music and the script. Being involved in the music industry for so long I must admit I get drawn to musicals for the songs. Not only is it a great jukebox feel-good show, it's got a great storyline."

"I do love wearing the uniform in the show! If I were to choose one of the Armed Forces to work for it would have to be the air force. I've always fancied myself as a bit of a Tom Cruise in Top Gun!"

Does he think there will ever be a musical about Blue? "Who knows? It would have to be All Rise, wouldn't it? Set in a courtroom or something," he quips.

Save The Last Dance For Me is at the New Alexandra Theatre from Tuesday to Saturday.

Rock bands team up for Academy gig

GIG of the week is a double bill in Birmingham featuring Irish surf/psych rockers September Girls with 'next big thing' Telegram. They will be sharing the bill at Birmingham's O2 Academy 3 on Tuesday. London-based Telegram released their debut album, Operator, this year and Dublin's September Girls recently released their latest album, Age of Indignation.

Other choice gigs include Travis at the O2 Academy tonight (Thu), while that venue has Mike Peters' reappraisal of The Alarm's Strength album on Sunday. US outfit Transviolet are at the Hare & Hounds, Kings Heath, on Sunday, where Eagulls dare on Tuesday.

Culture clash in sharp new satire

TORBEN Bett's class war comedy Invincible is coming to Birmingham Repertory Theatre as part of its first national tour.

The play about a London family who clash with neighbours in a northern town will feature Walsall actor Graeme Brookes and Kerry Bennett from TV's Casualty. It is at the Rep's Studio from Tuesday to Saturday.

There is a world premiere at Rep venue The Door when Brum-based touring theatre group present Made Up, a play about friendship between a movie star and her make-up artist. Written and directed by James Yarker, it's on from Saturday to Saturday, May 21.

At the double for pub blues sessions

A BUSY weekend for blues fans is on the way when one of the Midlands' best sessions doubles up at two Wolverhampton pubs.

The Room 4 The Blues session, run by Tim Jenks, will be taking place at the Claregate pub tomorrow (Friday) from 8pm and at the Dog And Doublet in North Street on Sunday, at 4pm.

Both sessions are free to attend and will feature Tim's band plus guest musicians.

Tim said: "We never know what is going to happen at Room 4 The Blues. Any musicians that want to have a jam are more than welcome to join us."

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Appointments are usually for three years with a commitment of between twelve to twenty days a year to attend Board and Sub-Committee meetings. Trustees are unpaid but may be reimbursed for reasonable out of pocket expenses.

CVs and a covering letter in MS Word format should be submitted by e-mail please to dionnelegge@acastourbridge.plus.com.

Closing date: Friday 10th June 2016.

Interviews will be held towards the end of October.

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CHOICE



Graham Norton

Eurovision Song Contest

2016
(BBC1, 8pm)

Graham Norton commentates on the 61st musical extravaganza from Sweden, who won last year with 'Heroes' by Mans Zelmerlow. He'll be back this year, co-hosting tonight's show from the Stockholm's Globe Arena with Petra Mede. All eyes will be on Joe and Jake, who are aiming to become the first UK winners since 1997 with their song 'You're Not Alone'. However, they are likely to face stiff competition from the 25 other countries, including Ireland's entry Nicky Byrne with his song 'Sunshine' - that's assuming the former Westlife star has made it through last Thursday's semi-final and the host nation's 17-year-old Frans with his upbeat ballad 'If I Were Sorry'.

BBC1

6.00 Breakfast. **10.00 Saturday Kitchen** Live. **11.30** Mary Berry Cooks. (R) **12.00** BBC News: Weather. **12.10** Football Focus. **12.50** Saturday Sportsday. **1.00** The Brownlow. An Olympic Story. **1.30** Live from the FA Cup Final. **2.00** Chelsea (Kick-off 2.00pm). **4.20** Flog It! (R) **5.10** BBC News. **5.20** Regional Programme. **5.30** Can't Touch This. Zoe Ball and Ashley Banjo present the game show in which 16 contestants are challenged to battle their way through obstacle course filled with prizes they must touch to claim.

6.20 Pointless Celebrities. New series. Alexander Armstrong and Richard Osman give another selection of famous faces a chance to take part in the unorthodox quiz show. This time, the pair invite past entrants in the Eurovision Song Contest to form teams and display their general knowledge, ahead the grand final of the 2016 contest, which takes place later this evening. Former winners Johnny Logan and Linda Martin join forces, while Natalie Power and Russ Spencer of ill-fated 2007 UK entry Scooch team up. Jeremy Frost and Joanne Clifton, from Britain's 1998 representatives Precious form a new double-act, while certain members of legendary Eurovision success story Bucks Fizz also put their brains to the test.

7.10 The National Lottery: It's In To Win It. New series. Five contestants answer questions to scoop a cash prize. Includes the Lotto and Thunderball draws, with Vincent Simone and Flavia Cacace pushing the button.

8.00 Eurovision Song Contest 2016. Graham Norton commentates on the musical extravaganza from the Globe Arena in Stockholm, Sweden, where Joe and Jake are flying the flag for the UK with 'You're Not Alone'. Subsequent programmes subject to change.

11.30 BBC News: Weather; National Lottery Update.

11.50 Peter Kay's Comedy Shuffle. Including a clip from The Ice Cream Man Cometh episode of That Peter Kay Thing. Plus, and Brian Potter and Andy Pippin sing I'm Gonna Be (500) Miles (accompanied by an all-star cast). (R)

12.20 Film: Buster. (1988) **1.55** Weather for the Week Ahead. **2.00** BBC News.

BBC2

6.40 Film: The Westerner. (1940) **8.15** Film: A Walk in the Sun. (1945) **10.10** Homes Under the Hammer. (R) **11.10** Natural World. (R) **12.00** The Hairy Bikers: Everyday Gourmet. (R) **1.00** Total Wipeout. (R) **2.00** The TV Show. (R) **2.05** Escape to the Continent. (R) **2.05** Money for Nothing. (R) **3.50** The Hairy Bikers' Pubs That Built Britain. (R) **4.20** Bake Off: Creme de la Creme. (R) **5.20** This Week's World.

6.00 Gardeners' World. (R) **6.30** Attenborough's Passion Project: Lost Worlds, Vanished Lives. The third programmes from David Attenborough's back catalogue takes the form of extracts from a 1989 series in which he used fossils to detail the lives of extinct creatures.

7.30 Attenborough's Passion Project: Darwin's Tree of Life. David Attenborough argues that Charles Darwin's theory of evolution is now more important than ever, revealing how the scientist developed his ground-breaking ideas.

8.30 Dad's Army. Classic comedy with the Home Guard. (R)

9.00 The Hollow Crown: The Wars of the Roses – Henry VI Part II. Ben Power and Dominic Cooke's adaptation of Shakespeare's Henriad continues with the second part of Henry VI. The Wars of the Roses are well under way, and following their defeat at the battle of St Albans, the Lancastrians are forced to grant concessions to the Yorkists. King Henry negotiates to keep the crown for his lifetime, but disinters it for his son Prince Edward, to the horror of his imperious wife Margaret.

Determined to see his son on the throne, Margaret mounts a brutal assault on Plantagenet's family, decimating his dynasty, but failing to eliminate his three elder sons, Edward, George and Richard. In response, the York boys swear to avenge the murder of their father and younger brother, seeking the aid of the duplicitous Duke of Warwick as they pitch England back into bloody civil war.

11.05 Film: Margin Call. (2011) Drama, starring Kevin Spacey and Paul Bettany.

12.45 Film: The Silence. (2010) Thriller, starring Ulrich Thomsen. **2.35** This Is BBC Two.

ITV

6.00 CITV: The Aquabats! Super Show! **6.25** Pat & Stan. (R) **6.35** Dino Dan: Trek's Adventures. (R) **7.00** Signed Stories: Share a Story. (R) **7.05** Sooty. **7.15** Supermovers. (R) **7.30** Nerds & Nerds. (R) **7.45** The Big Bang Theory Show. (R) **8.00** Thunderbirds Are Go. (R) **8.25** ITV News. **8.30** Weekend. **9.25** Murder, She Wrote. (R) **10.20** Murder, She Wrote. (R) **11.25** The Jeremy Kyle Show USA. **12.20** ITV News: Weather. **12.24** Regional Programme. **12.25** The Jeremy Kyle Show. (R) **1.30** BBC Champ. (R) **2.30** Film: Agent Cody Banks. (2003) **4.30** The Wine Show. **5.35** Regional Programme: Weather. **5.45** ITV News: Weather.

6.00 You've Been Framed! Bounces Back! Harry Hill narrates another 60-minute special edition of the comical clip show, applying his unique brand of silly, satirical commentary to a selection of hilarious hijinks captured on video by viewers at home.

7.00 Bang on the Money. Holiday camp entertainers The Hi-De-His from Somerset and The Wolf Pack from Wolverhampton aim to hit a specific target number 'bang on' in physical and mental challenges.

8.00 Britain's Got Talent. The nationwide talent show reaches the penultimate round of auditions, as Ant and Dec introduce another selection of would-be stars to judges Simon Cowell, Amanda Holden, David Walliams and Alesha Dixon. Unless he finally gives in to temptation last week, Simon remains the only judge who has yet to send an act straight through to the semi-finals by pressing his Golden Buzzer. Will this week's crop of auditions contain the perfect performance to entice him into hitting the button?

9.15 Play to the Whistle. Boxer David Haye, Dragons' Den star Peter Jones and comedienne Sara Pascoe join team captains Frank Lampard and Bradley Walsh for the sports-themed comedy panel show.

10.00 ITV News: Weather.

10.15 Film: The Dark Knight. (2008) Batman and his allies are pushed to their limits as criminal mastermind the Joker plunges Gotham into anarchy. Comic-book fan sequel, with Christian Bale. **12.55** Jackpot247. **3.00** Murder, She Wrote. (R) **3.50** ITV Nightscreen.

CHANNEL 4

6.10 The King of Queens. (R) **6.35** The King of Queens. (R) **7.00** Mobil 1 The Grid. **7.30** British Rally Championship. **7.55** Everybody Loves Raymond. (R) **8.25** Everybody Loves Raymond. (R) **8.55** Everybody Loves Raymond. (R) **9.00** Everybody Loves Raymond. (R) **9.30** Milkshake! **9.55** Ninja Turtles. (R) **10.15** The Saturday Show Live. **11.40** Funniest Fails, Falls & Flops. **12.10** Police Interceptors. (R) **1.10** Police Interceptors. (R) **2.10** Police Interceptors. (R) **3.10** Police Interceptors. (R) **4.10** Police Interceptors. (R) **5.10** Can't Pay? We'll Take It Away. (R)

6.05 Can't Pay? We'll Take It Away. Paul and Ben face a challenging eviction in London, where a vulnerable tenant in rent arrears has barricaded her front door, and the agents receive a tirade of abuse. Meanwhile, Brian and Del chase a debt of nearly £2,000 in Surrey, before trying to recover almost £3,000 in Northamptonshire. Finally, Steve and Ru head to Portsmouth to evict a young family for a landlord who wants her property back. (R)

7.10 NCIS: Greatest Ever Episodes. The team is called to a high school on a marine base, where a pupil has taken his classmates hostage and is threatening to detonate a bomb strapped to his chest. Mark Harmon stars. (R)

8.00 Grand Canal Journeys. Timothy West and Prunella Scales conclude the series by travelling down the Stratford-upon-Avon Canal, accompanied by Tim's daughter and her family. The couple revisit places that hold fond memories from their early days of the relationship, as well as looking back on the beginnings of their acting careers and pinning on a performance in the church where Shakespeare is buried. Last in the series. (R)

9.00 Film: X-Men: First Class. (2011) Telepathic mutant Charles Xavier forms the first generation of the superhero team in the 1960s. Their battle with a Nazi war criminal manipulating the world toward nuclear war gradually drives a wedge between Xavier and his ally Magneto, leading them to become deadly enemies. Superhero adventure prequel, starring James McAvoy and Michael Fassbender.

11.35 Film: GI Joe: The Rise of Cobra. (2009) Action adventure, with Channing Tatum and Sienna Miller.

1.50 Hollyoaks. (R) **3.55** Supershoppers. (R) **4.50** Posh Pawnbrokers. (R) **5.45** Will & Grace. (R)

DIGITAL

BBC Four
7.00 Doris Day: Virgin Territory **8.00** Venice **9.00** Hinterland **10.30** Dancing Cheek to Cheek: An Intimate History of Dance **11.30** Blues at the BBC **12.30** BBC Four Sessions: Bonnie Raitt **1.30** Blues America **3.30** Close

ITV2
11.00 Britain's Got Talent **1.20** Britain's Got Talent **1.20** Catchphrase **2.05** Scorpion **3.05** Film: The Scorpion King (2002) **4.05** FYI Daily **4.10** Film: The Scorpion King (2002) **4.50** Film: The Smurfs (2011) **5.50** FYI Daily **5.55** Film: The Smurfs (2011) **6.55** Film: Back to the Future (1985) **7.55** FYI Daily **8.00** Film: Back to the Future (1985) **9.15** Britain's Got More Talent **10.30** Celebrity Juice **11.05** Family Guy **12.35** American Dad! **1.35** The Cleveland Show **2.30** @eleven **2.50** Teleshopping **5.50** ITV2 Nightscreen

ITV3
11.00 Big Bang Theory **1.20** Britain's Got Talent **1.20** Catchphrase **2.05** Scorpion **3.05** Film: The Scorpion King (2002) **4.05** FYI Daily **4.10** Film: The Scorpion King (2002) **4.50** Film: The Smurfs (2011) **5.50** FYI Daily **5.55** Film: Back to the Future (1985) **7.55** FYI Daily **8.00** Film: Back to the Future (1985) **9.15** Britain's Got More Talent **10.30** Celebrity Juice **11.05** Family Guy **12.35** American Dad! **1.35** The Cleveland Show **2.30** @eleven **2.50** Teleshopping **5.50** ITV2 Nightscreen

ITV4
11.00 Paw Stars **1.45** British Touring Car Championship Highlights **3.15** Film: Blues Brothers 2000 (1998) **4.20** FYI Daily **4.25** Film: Blues Brothers 2000 (1998) **5.45** Film: Diamonds Are Forever (1971) **7.00** FYI Daily **7.05** Film: Diamonds Are Forever (1971) **9.10** FYI Daily **9.15** Film: Jaws: The Revenge (1978) **10.00** FYI Daily **11.05** Film: Total Recall (1990) **11.00** FYI Daily **11.15** Film: Death Wish 3 (1985) **1.15** FYI Daily **1.20** Film: Death Wish 3 (1985) **2.00** FYI Daily **2.20** Hogan's Heroes **2.45** ITV4 Teleshopping **3.00** Teleshopping

E4
11.00 The Goldbergs **12.30** Brooklyn Nine-Nine **1.30** The Big Bang Theory **2.30** Film: Blues Brothers 2000 (1998) **4.20** FYI Daily **4.25** Film: Blues Brothers 2000 (1998) **5.45** Film: Diamonds Are Forever (1971) **7.00** FYI Daily **7.05** Film: Diamonds Are Forever (1971) **9.10** FYI Daily **9.15** Film: Jaws: The Revenge (1978) **10.00** FYI Daily **11.05** Film: Total Recall (1990) **11.00** FYI Daily **11.15** Film: Death Wish 3 (1985) **1.15** FYI Daily **1.20** Film: Death Wish 3 (1985) **2.00** FYI Daily **2.20** Hogan's Heroes **2.45** ITV4 Teleshopping **3.00** Teleshopping

E4
11.00 Winchester '73 (1950) **1.00** Journey to the Center of the Earth (2008) **2.50** The Three Stooges (2012) **4.40** The Dark Crystal (1982) **6.25** Battleship (2012) **9.00** The King's Speech (2010) **11.20** Stoker (2013) **1.20** The Runaways (2010) **3.30** Close

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FILM CHOICES

MONDAY

Die Another Day, ITV, 11.10pm

James Bond is suspended from duty after being taken hostage in North Korea, but goes against orders to track down those who betrayed him. Spy adventure, starring Pierce Brosnan, Halle Berry, Toby Stephens, Judi Dench and John Cleese. (2002)

TUESDAY

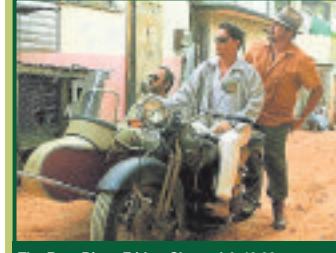
Rosamunde Pilcher's Summer, Channel 5, 3.15pm

A woman returns to her ex-husband's stately home after years away in a bid to solve the riddle of her daughter's suicide. But as romance blossoms with one member of the household, the schemes of the master of the house threaten everyone's happiness. Romantic drama, starring Senta Berger, Michael York, Tom Conti and Frank Finlay. (2008)

WEDNESDAY

Love Happens, Channel 4, 1.25am

A self-help guru goes on a lecture tour after his wife's death, offering advice on how to cope with grief. However, when he falls in love he begins to realise he has yet to confront his own loss. Romantic drama, starring Aaron Eckhart and Jennifer Aniston. (2009)

**The Rum Diary**, Friday, Channel 4, 12.30am

THURSDAY

False Pretences, Channel 5, 3.15pm

A woman's life is left in tatters when her wealthy husband kills himself after being conned out of millions by his best friend. Seeking to escape the painful memories, she leaves town and takes a job in a diner – where she plots to get revenge on the man she blames for her husband's suicide. Thriller, starring Peta Wilson and Stewart Bick. (2004)

FRIDAY

The Rum Diary, Channel 4, 12.30am

A New York journalist tires of America in the early 1960s, and relocates to Puerto Rico, where he works for a local paper and throws himself into the decadent local lifestyle. His obsession with a woman who has also arrived from the States leads to him getting mixed up in the corrupt dealings of her property tycoon fiance. Comedy drama based on Hunter S Thompson's novel, starring Johnny Depp. (2011)

Finding life as a nanny is not all child's play

For those who were brought up during the 1980s, it doesn't seem like that long ago.

However, it was a different world, one in which children felt self to play out after school with their mates, a maximum of four TV channels existed, videos were only just getting off the ground, the internet was unheard of and pads were all the rage.

Nina Stibbe was just making her way into the world at that time. In 1982, she turned 20 and decided to make the big move from her family home in Leicester to the bright lights of London – or Camden, at least.

Nina landed a job as the nanny to two lively young boys, brothers Joe and Max, the offspring of film and TV director Stephen Frears and his former wife Mary-Kay Wilmer, the American-born co-founder of the London Review of Books; it was into Wilmer's household that she moved.

Around 30 years later, Stibbe compiled a book about her experiences of living there, a time that brought her into contact with such glitterati as Alan Bennett and Jonathan

Miller, both of whom were neighbours – at the time, she had an inkling they were famous, but had no idea what for.

The book, *Love, Nina: Despatches from Family Life*, features the letters she wrote to her sister about her 'glamorous' new life, and became an instant hit, winning the Non-fiction Book of the Year category at the prestigious National Book Awards in 2014.

Now it's been turned into a five-part drama by Nick Hornby – his first project for the small screen – who fell in love with the story when the tome was first published.

"Nina Stibbe's book *Love, Nina* has already established itself as a much-loved piece of comic writing and I love it," says Hornby.

"Her observations and worldview were the inspiration for a show that we think captures the same spirit. It's been a joy to write and we're thrilled with the quality of our cast."

Rather than being a straight adaptation, Hornby has taken the essence of the story and turned it into

a fictionalised tale, with names changed and situations altered. However, it still retains the flavour of Stibbe's experiences and offers an insight into life on a cultured corner of north London during the 1980s.

It has an excellent cast too, headed by Helena Bonham Carter. She isn't known for taking on serial TV dramas, but was clearly impressed by the script; filming probably allowed her to stay close to her family home in London too.

The opening episode introduces us to Nina, played by Faye Marsay, when she is interviewed by George (Bonham Carter) for the position of nanny at her home in Gloucester Crescent.

It's there that she meets the two boys, Max and Joe, who will become the centre of her universe over the coming months, although it soon becomes clear that Nina may have exaggerated her skills as a help around the home...

Jason Watkins, Ethan Rouse, Harry Webster and Josh McGuire are among the supporting cast.

**Faye Marsay stars in Love, Nina**, Friday, BBC1, 9.30pm

BEST OF THE REST

MONDAY
The Great British Sewing Bee
BBC2, 9pm

A few dedicated fans were beginning to wonder if this much-loved show had been axed – its winner has usually been crowned by this point in the year. But all good things come to those who wait, and so Claudia Winkelman takes charge of the fourth series of the amateur sewing competition. Patrick Grant also returns as a judge, but his usual cohort, May Martin, won't be joining him – she's been replaced by Esme Young, co-founder of fashion label Swanky Modes. They will cast their expert eyes over the work of 10 hopefuls who face three challenges.

Upstart Crow
BBC2, 10pm
Will's controversial new play is about to be presented to Queen Elizabeth, but it goes missing and the finger of suspicion points to his best friend and fellow author Kit Marlowe. The playwright has to scramble desperately to come up with a way to recover his stolen masterpiece, though given its politically sensitive content, is he really wise to want it back? Ben Elton's comedy about William Shakespeare's family life and his professional career, starring David Mitchell as the Bard.

TUESDAY
Marcella
ITV, 9pm

After seven weeks of nail-biting tension and excellent performances from the likes of Anna Friel, Jamie Bamber and Harry Lloyd, *The Bridge* creator Hans Rosenfeldt's crime drama comes to a Earth-shattering climax tonight. The identity of the killer is finally revealed, which sends shockwaves through the entire team.

Leicester's Impossible Dream - Gary Lineker's Story of the 2015/16 Premier League Season
BBC1, 10.45pm

The Match of the Day host looks back at an astonishing campaign in the top flight, which saw 5,000/1 outsiders Leicester City defy all expectations and pick up their first-ever title. The Foxes began the season as one of the favourites for relegation, and their appointment of former Chelsea boss Claudio Ranieri to replace the sacked Nigel Pearson was seen as uninspiring by many critics. However, the charismatic Italian brought a swashbuckling style of play to the team.

WEDNESDAY
Deepcut: Behind the Barbed Wire
BBC2, 9pm

As the inquest delivers its verdict into the death of young soldier Cheryl James, former soldiers who served alongside her at the notorious Deepcut barracks speak for the first time. James was found dead from a bullet wound to her head in November 1995, and was one of four recruits to die at the base in seven years. The documentary hears what life is really like behind the barbed wire, including the culture of bullying and physical and sexual abuse.

Upstart Crow, Monday, BBC2, 10pm

who better to get the answers for us than Jeremy Paxman? In this documentary, he's heading to the EU's headquarters in Brussels to learn more about how the decisions that affect half a billion people – including the resident of the UK – are made. Back in Britain, he looks at how Westminster's politics have been shaped by our relationship with Europe, and why the concept of 'sovereignty' has become so integral to the debate surrounding the referendum. Paxman also hears a range of opinions on whether or not the UK should remain within the union, and asks how our relationship with Europe might change whether we stay or go.

FRIDAY
The Secret
ITV, 9pm

Seeing Matthew's death as God's full and final punishment for his past sins, Colin convinces himself that God will now allow him to prosper. However, when he loses all his money in a financial scam and his second wife Kyle threatens to leave him, he offers a full confession to the church and police. When Hazel later pleads her innocence, Colin agrees to appear as a key witness for the prosecution, determined to take her down with him. Drama, starring James Nesbitt, Genevieve O'Reilly and Katherine Kingsley. Last in the series.

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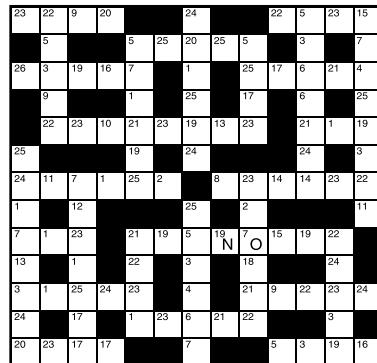


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Codeword

Each number in the grid represents a different letter of the alphabet and every letter of the alphabet is used. Use the given letter(s) to the right of the main grid to start you off.



LAST WEEK'S SOLUTION:

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26
V	W	U	F	I	Z	A	M	J	L	S	K	C	N	D	G	Y	X	E	O	R	H	Q	P	B	

Quiz

- Who was Spandau's last prisoner?
- What is the largest of the Society Islands?
- Which illness is also known as perftis?
- Which sport holds the Super Bowl contest?
- Which superhero made his debut in Action Comics in 1938?
- Which organ is affected by otitis?
- Who was Ptolemy XVI's mother?
- Of which bird is Meleagris gallopavo the domestic variety?
- Which comedy was the first British film to break the £20m box office barrier?
- Which sport was devised by William G Morgan in 1895?

Last week's solutions:

Quiz: 1 Joanna Lumley; 2 Arizona; 3 Caesar; 4 Yarrow; 5 Knot; 6 Boris Pasternak; 7 New Zealand; 8 Ray Reardon; 9 Mount Erebus; 10 Grape.

Niner: HECTORING

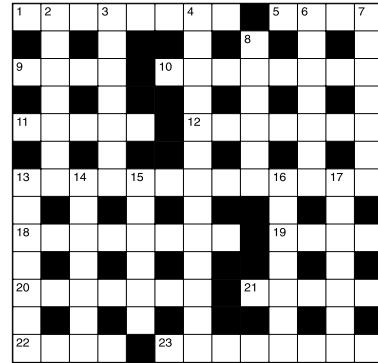
Double Crossword

Choose either quick or cryptic clues - both fit the same grid.

Cryptic Clues:

Across

- Game to set kilts swirling? (8)
- Shape of a seat (4)
- Anyone in it is out (4)
- What the bride says afterwards won't be in church! (8)
- Wild geese? It's just a yarn! (5)
- Weak, and liable to get the wind-up? (3,4)
- Hit-or-miss affair indicating a wrongful conviction? (5,3,5)
- Mollified five hundred with sausage mash! (8)
- A smack on the wrist (4)
- He has main control (7)
- Their families are their pride (5)
- Ride past (4)
- Beached and abandoned (8)
- Game to set kilts swirling? (8)
- The sort of critic who strikes? (7)
- Female Russian artisan, perhaps (7)
- An ordeal for the patient? (9,4)
- Excel or finish with such sports (7)
- He may live for weeks on water (7)
- Not a cutting look! (6)
- Unusual terrain for a coach (7)
- Mollified five hundred with sausage mash! (8)
- The length an association will go to (6)
- Disturbance in court, perhaps (7)
- Misdemeanour of a receiver (7)



Quick Clues:

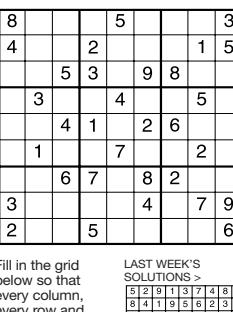
Across

- Supplement (8)
- Cure (4)
- Worry (4)
- Plan of campaign (8)
- Change (5)
- Titular (7)
- Unusually (13)
- Abash (8)
- Dispatch (4)
- Distinctive (7)
- Started (5)
- Uninteresting (4)
- Due proportion (8)
- Puzzle (7)
- Outermost (7)
- On purpose (13)
- Everlasting (7)
- Faithfulness (7)
- Non-professional (6)
- Released from obligation (7)
- Solidify (7)
- Gain (6)
- Stern (7)
- Listlessness (7)

Down

- Supplement (8)
- Cure (4)
- Worry (4)
- Plan of campaign (8)
- Change (5)
- Titular (7)
- Unusually (13)
- Abash (8)
- Dispatch (4)
- Distinctive (7)
- Started (5)
- Uninteresting (4)
- Due proportion (8)
- Puzzle (7)
- Outermost (7)
- On purpose (13)
- Everlasting (7)
- Faithfulness (7)
- Non-professional (6)
- Released from obligation (7)
- Solidify (7)
- Gain (6)
- Stern (7)
- Listlessness (7)

Sudoku

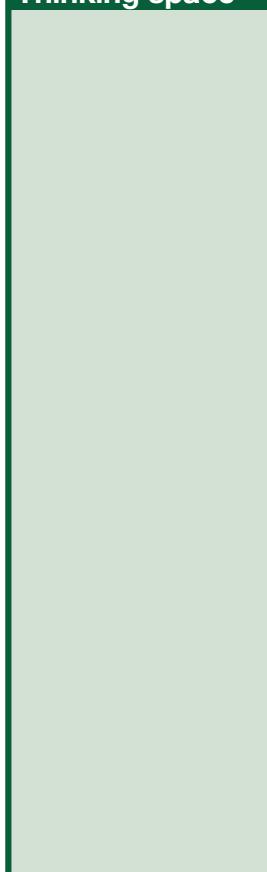


Fill in the grid below so that every column, every row and each of the 3x3 boxes contains all the digits from 1 to 9.

LAST WEEK'S SOLUTIONS >
5 2 9 1 3 7 4 8 6
8 4 1 9 5 6 2 3 7
3 7 6 2 8 4 1 5 9
2 6 7 4 5 3 9 8
5 1 4 6 9 3 7 4 1
4 3 8 7 2 5 6 1 5
9 1 4 8 7 2 5 6 3
7 8 5 3 6 1 9 4 2
6 3 2 5 4 9 8 7 1

LAST WEEK'S CROSSWORD SOLUTIONS:
CRYPTIC - Across: 1 Static; 4 Astray; 9 Preoccupation; 10 Overrun; 11 Irene; 12 Hoops; 14 Baths; 18 Stair; 19 Artist; 21 Goes overboard; 22 Steams; 23 Co-heir; Down: 1 Siphon; 2 An eye for an eye; 3 Incur; 5 Stamina; 6 Raise the Stake; 7 Yankee; 8 Burns; 13 Perform; 15 Usages; 16 Tissues; 17 Gender; 20 Taboo; 21 Strayed; 1 Quince; 4 Cuckoo; 8 Protection; 10 Strayed; 11 Patri; 12 Build; 14 Repel; 18 Robot; 19 Riposte; 21 Embarrassment; 22 Treble; 23 Reason; Down: 1 Queasy; 2 Imperturbable; 3 Essay; 5 Example; 6 Shiftlessness; 7 Random; 8 Guide; 13 Literal; 15 Priest; 16 Broad; 17 Beaten; 20 Paste.

Thinking space



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SAT 21 MAY, 16 JUL, 6 AUG, 3 SEP, 15 OCT

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5 DAYS MONDAYS 23, 30 MAY, 6, 13, 20, 27 JUN, 4, 11, 18, 25 JUL, 5, 12, 19, 26 AUG, 5, 12, 19, 26 SEP, 3, 10, 24 OCT
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Just the beginning – the tandoori king prawns were plump



The bright stuff – chicken tikka masala



Chop chop – the tandoori lamb chops

Pictures by Steve Leath



Proving popular – the Penn Tandoori

Spice is right with combination of flavours that really hit the spot

THAT'S the best curry I've had in a long time," declared my sister. "The service was excellent," stated my eight-going-on-18 niece.

While my five-year-old nephew, who is the fussiest eater I've ever known, cleaned his plate.

And that, my friends, is testament enough to the fantastic meal we had at Penn Tandoori recently. In the history of writing these reviews I could probably count the number of five star ratings on one hand, but Penn Tandoori, at 272 Penn Road, Wolverhampton, is deserving of every bit of praise because it was faultless.

We arrived on a Monday evening during the Easter school holidays, and were pretty much banging on the door at 6pm we were so hungry.

I arrived late, but my sister and her chil-

Lisa Wright tucks in

dren were already seated, coats kindly hung up for them and menus in hand.

The restaurant was quiet at this stage – we were the first through the door – but gradually through the evening it began to get busier, with a mix of couples and a few of the large tables that appeared to be celebrating birthdays. And when a restaurant is busy on a traditionally quiet Monday, that's always a good sign in my book.

Inside, the decor is nothing to scream about, but the environment is comfortable and relaxed. There's a small welcome area with a sofa and coffee table as you walk in, and as you are led into the restaurant it is surprisingly roomy, with a fully-licensed bar stocking a wide range of beers, wines and spirits.

It looks unfussy and classic with leather

chairs, cream tablecloths, mint green walls, neat black napkins and a few ornaments here and there. Ultimately it is a classic venue.

We ordered soft drinks for the kids and a bottle of wine for the grown-ups while we looked through the menu, which has a great mix of classic dishes and some splendid-sounding specials.

Munched

As we were deciding what to order, we munched through a mountain of crisp poppadoms which came with various dips.

The menu was full of tempting offerings, particularly on the chef's specials menu, such as the chicken capsula – boneless tandoori chicken, cooked with ginger, herbs and green chilli, while the Penn special salmon was also tempting; a salmon dish served with traditional beans and garlic.

The menu also had all the classic offerings such as bhunas, pathias, madras and korma dishes, which gave the option of being vegetable, meat or prawn dishes. And if you don't fancy just one dish, you can also go for a combination option.

Suggestions include chicken korma with chicken bhuna, chicken jalfrezi and lamb balti along with chicken dalsak and chicken dupiaza – perfect for those who can't make up their minds! There are also plenty of vegetable and side dishes.

Our food was delicious – my notoriously picky nephew showing off his clean plate with pride after his meal was proof of that.

The service was friendly and relaxed. And if that didn't win us over, the rose each of us three girls was given at the end of the night guaranteed we left with a smile on our faces. The bill came to just over £75, including a bottle of wine, worth every penny.

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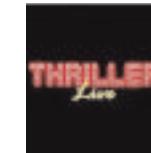
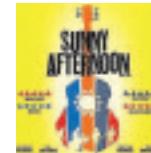
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PROPERTY

YOUR WEEKLY
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Four-bed detached home is in a quiet sought-after area

A well-presented four-bedroom detached home, 12 Alpine Drive, Netherton, Dudley, is situated in a quiet and highly sought after cul-de-sac close to popular local schools and to many amenities. It is for sale through The Property Shop at £215,000.

Having double glazing, central heating and spacious accommodation this briefly comprises a welcoming reception hallway, a modern refitted kitchen, large lounge with large patio doors overlooking the rear garden, guest WC, utility, study or play room (currently used for gym equipment), and a store room which is accessed from the rear garden.

The first-floor accommodation includes a master bedroom with an office/dressing room/nursery attached, there are also three further bedrooms and a family bathroom.

Externally there is a driveway to the front and lawned gardens. To the rear is a landscaped garden with lawn, a Koi carp pond, paved patio and seating area.

The property currently benefits from super-fast broadband with speeds up to 100 Mbps available.

A spokesman for the selling agent said: "An early viewing of this property is strongly recommended to avoid missing out!"

The Property Shop offers a variety of fantastic packages, such as one fully inclusive fee that includes both estate agent and solicitors fees, and with packages starting from £792 (including VAT) you won't find a better deal anywhere, said the spokesman for the estate agents.

Netherton Park is located near the town centre and was created on a former colliery waste site. Another old industrial area that has been reclaimed for public recreation is the Bumble Hole Local Nature Reserve.

The Dudley No 2 canal runs through the reserve and is the site for an annual narrowboat festival. A canalside visitor centre provides information on the reserve.

Nearby Netherton Cricket Club is situated on Highbridge Road and celebrated its 140th anniversary in 2006.

Netherton Reservoir is a popular resort for boat enthusiasts as well as scuba divers.

KEY FEATURES

- Sought after cul-de-sac location
- Spacious accommodation
- Modern refitted kitchen
- Four bedrooms
- Store room
- Off-road parking
- Energy rating C

NETHERTON £215,000



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NEW

COVENTRY, Underhill Close £1,300 pcm+fees
A great opportunity to rent this well presented modern 4 bedroom detached property in then sought after location of Fintan's parish of Baginton area, current ofsted grade. Outstanding on January 21st 2015. This double glazed, gas central heated house has entrance hall, cloakroom, large lounge, fitted kitchen with integrated appliances, 4 good size bedrooms with 1 en-suite shown, 3 with fitted wardrobes, family bathroom, garage, driveway & low maintenance garden. EPC: D



NEW

SUTTON COLDFIELD, Hartopp Court £800 pcm+fees
A delightful ground floor 2 bedroom apartment with an en-suite to master. The property has excellent links to Birmingham City Centre, being located a short walk from the railway station, is gas centrally heated and double glazed and is located in a gated complex with secure allocated parking. EPC: TBC

NEW

Halesowen, Meadowbrook Road £775 pcm+fees
Large 3 bed mucklow style semi-detached property features: 2 reception rooms, fitted kitchen, 2 double bedrooms, 1 single, bathroom with shower, garage (storage only), private rear garden, driveway parking for multiple vehicles, gas central heated and double glazed. Ideally located for Huntingdon and Lutley Primary School. EPC: TBC



LET

WITHYMOOR, Aldeford Drive £725 pcm+fees
Well presented semi-detached house situated on a popular estate. Occupying a quiet cul-de-sac location. Featuring an attractive lounge with breakfast kitchen to the rear. To the 1st floor there are 3 bedrooms and a family bathroom, whilst to the outside there are gardens to front and rear. In addition, there is a garage and drive, and the property benefits from gas fired central heating and double glazing. Not to be missed! EPC: D



HALESOWEN, Mayfield Road £695 pcm+fees
An unfurnished detached bungalow set in a quiet cul-de-sac in this very popular residential area close to schools and bus links. Featuring large lounge, fitted kitchen, conservatory, 2 double & 1 large single bedroom, gas central heating, double glazing, front & rear gardens, garage. A property to be seen and appreciated. EPC: D



BRIERLEY HILL, Hern Road £650 pcm+fees
A detached bungalow in this quiet popular location having a large lounge/dining area, fitted kitchen, 2 double bedrooms, shower room, front & rear gardens, garage & large driveway to front, gas central heating, double glazing. Short term let only. EPC: D



WOLVERHAMPTON, Chelston Drive £650 pcm+fees
A 3 bedroom detached home located in a quiet cul-de-sac location and benefits gas central heating and double glazing. The accommodation briefly comprises a reception hall, lounge, dining room, fitted kitchen, conservatory, 3 bedrooms, garage and paved driveway. EPC: B



BIRMINGHAM, St Pauls Square £625 pcm+fees
A fully furnished 2nd floor studio apartment. The apartment is ready for immediate occupation. The accommodation (accessed via a communal entrance) to comprise a hallway, a double bedroom with en-suite, a further well appointed bathroom with shower, gas central heating, double glazing and allocated parking. EPC: B



LET



HALESOWEN, Portslaw Road £595 pcm+fees
A well presented 3 bedroom semi-detached house in sought after area. The property is offered unfurnished and comprises of: hall, guest wc, lounge, fitted dining kitchen, 3 bedrooms and bathroom with shower, low maintenance rear garden, driveway and gas central heating and double glazing. EPC: E



HALESOWEN, Bloomfield Street North £575 pcm+fees
Extremely well presented and surprisingly large terrace with off road parking. Within walking distance to Halesowen, local bus routes and shops, comprises 2 bedrooms, nice lounge, attractive fitted diner/kitchen with white goods excluding washing machine, utility room, house bathroom with shower, a glorious court yard garden and gated driveway. EPC: E



LET



HAGLEY, Newlands Close £595 pcm+fees
A superb modern ground floor apartment located near to Hagley Village & situated close to motorway links, open plan lounge/kitchen with appliances, double bedroom with fitted wardrobes, en-suite shower room & 1 large single bedroom, bathroom with shower, secure allocated parking, secure entry system. Not to be missed!! EPC: C



HALESOWEN, Clifton Road £575 pcm+fees
A property not to be missed! Set within a quiet cul-de-sac, a lovely mid terraced property which is ideal for local shops, Rowley Regis Train Station and the M5 J2, comprising of: 2 double bedrooms with fitted wardrobes, good size lounge, modern kitchen, bathroom with shower, double glazing, gas central heating, driveway parking for 3 cars, small rear garden. EPC: D



WOLLESWORCE, Oakfield Road £575 pcm+fees
• A LONG TERM RENTAL PROPERTY • A really deceptive 3 bedroom property close to local shops and schools. This fantastic home has been fully refurbished in the last 12 months. Featuring a spacious lounge, brand new fitted kitchen and bathroom. You really do need to view to appreciate the amount of accommodation on offer. Driveway and garage, enclosed rear garden. EPC: D



HALESOWEN, Cavalier Drive £525 pcm+fees
Located within walking distance of central Halesowen. This modern unfurnished 3rd floor apartment, briefly comprising of: lounge, kitchen, 2 double bedrooms, bathroom, balcony, fitted kitchen with white goods, 2 bedrooms, bathroom with shower, communal gardens, allocated parking. Space. Available Now! EPC: D



KIDDERMINSTER, Patin House £525 pcm+fees
A 1 bedroom ground floor apartment set in a converted Victorian house comprising of: porch, lounge, fitted kitchen with white goods, 1 double bedroom, bathroom with shower, study, double glazing, gas central heating, double glazing, communal gardens and allocated parking. Available Now! EPC: D



ROWLEY REGIS, Beeches Road £575 pcm+fees
An unfurnished mid terrace house, ideally located for local shops, buses and train station. Briefly comprising of: front lounge, fitted dining kitchen, 2 double bedrooms, shower room, gas central heating, maintenance free rear garden. EPC: D



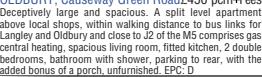
HALESOWEN, Cavalier Drive £525 pcm+fees
Located within walking distance of central Halesowen. This modern unfurnished 3rd floor apartment, briefly comprising of: lounge, kitchen, 2 double bedrooms, bathroom, balcony, fitted kitchen with white goods, 2 bedrooms, bathroom with shower, communal gardens, allocated parking. Space. Available Now! EPC: D



HALESOWEN, Lady Smith Road £525 pcm+fees
A mid terraced house in a sought after area for Colley Lane Primary School, bus links to Halesowen and Stourbridge. This house features 2 reception rooms, fitted kitchen with oven/hob, dining area, new downstairs shower room, 2 good size bedrooms, double glazing, gas central heating, rear garden. EPC: TBC



DUDLEY, Southgate Way £499 pcm+fees
A stunning and spacious well presented furnished to suit 1st floor apartment featuring 2 bedrooms, electric storage heating, double glazing, open plan living room with fitted kitchen, house bathroom with shower, allocated parking to rear, with the added bonus of a porch. Unfurnished. EPC: C



OLD BURY, Causeway Green Road £450 pcm+fees
Deceptively large and spacious. A split level apartment above local shops, within walking distance to bus links for Langley and Oldbury and close to J2 of the M5 comprises living room, spacious living room, fitted kitchen, 2 double bedrooms, bathroom with shower, parking to rear, with the added bonus of a porch. Unfurnished. EPC: D

PROPERTY



Attractive extended three bedroom property is in a quiet cul-de-sac location with gated parking

A stunning, extended semi-detached home in Club Row, Upper Gornal, Dudley, is for sale through Trinity Property at £169,995.

With three bedrooms and two dressing rooms, this beautiful home is situated in a quiet cul-de-sac location.

It has a modern fitted kitchen with breakfast bar area, Aga gas/electric

**UPPER GORNAL
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cooker, spacious downstairs living accommodation, including a lounge with a feature brick fireplace and gas fire, dining area and sitting area.

There are three bedrooms, two of which have dressing rooms off.

There is also a family bathroom, central heating with a new boiler, an attractive rear garden and patio area and a frontage that is gated off for parking.

This family home really must be viewed to be fully appreciated.

For more details contact Trinity Property on 01384 213395 or visit www.trinityproperty.net



Distinctive home is modern semi-detached family home just short walking distance from amenities

Superbly located within a short walking distance from the heart of Kingswinford, this is a distinctive and most deceptively spacious modern, semi-detached family home in Moss Road.

The very well proportioned layout with beautifully appointed accommodation is 'ready to move into'. It is for sale through Taylors at £174,950.

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The house comprises a reception hall, ground floor guests cloakroom, WC, large lounge, luxury fitted dining kitchen with built-in appliances, three excellent sized bedrooms (the master with an en-suite shower room), an attractive

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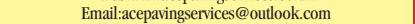


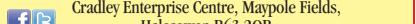
























































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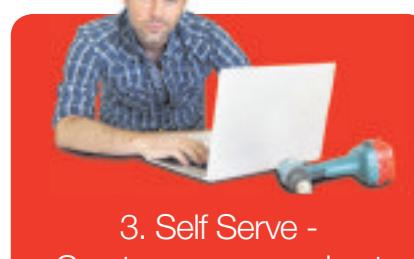
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- 1 Family
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- 5 Business & Farming
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- 7 Jobs
- 8 Motoring
- 9 Local Information
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JANE, young 41, very broadminded seeks chap any age for discreet no strings fun, any age, no time wasters ACA. Tel: No: 0906 515 3011 Box: 409715

LORRAINE, bored 36yr old looking for discreet no strings fun with likeminded uncomplicated male, any age/looks/status. Call me. Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 422241

LUCY first time advertiser, 32yrs, tall slim blonde airline worker, seeks discreet gent, any status for casual fling. Looks/age unimportant. Tel: 0906 515 3027 Box: 420237

SARA, 39, home owner, likes animals, tattoos and texting, looking for friend hopefully leading to more. Get in touch! Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 421455

SOPHIA, young 40yrs, married but bored, seeks discreet adult fun, any area, all calls answered. Tel: 0906 515 3019 Box: 413399

KAREN, 42yrs, attractive and broadminded, seeks no strings fun with chap any age, must be discreet. Tel: 0906 515 3039 Box: 407953

LUCY, 49, just looking to enjoy life, can you help? seeks fun and good times in or out, nothing heavy just no strings meets. Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 422223

EMILY, mature well educated lady, blonde and smart and broadminded seeks gent any age for no strings fun. ACA. Tel: 0906 515 3023 Box 421375

KAREN 32 a working petite blonde, enjoys nights out, music, etc. WLTM for more than just friendship with similar chilled, kind, easygoing guy. Tel: No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 422267

JESSIE, sophisticated, well educated brunette lady, 38yrs, WLTM man of any age for discreet chats, meetings and more. Age/looks unimportant must have SOH. Box 410787

CHRISTINE, 48, petite blue eyed blonde, attractive, many varied interests, looking for honest, caring, N/S romantic guy with GSOH to make my life complete again. Tel: No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 422245

CAROLINE, bowed housewife 48+, seeking a little excitement. Are you 30+ and discreet, if so ping me a text and give me a few details. Box: 4078682

MARILYN blue eyed curly just right female, 36, loves music, good wine, romantic strolls, cosy nights in, WLTM like-minded romantic for quality times. Age unimportant. Tel: No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 422227

JACKIE, 49, dark hair, green eyes, cuddly build, likes going out/ gym, reading, looking for an honest gentleman for friendship/possible relationship. Tel: No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 422257

BROWN eyed brummie female, 65, smoker, likes music, cinema, meals out, WLTM male, 66-73, for LTR. Text only Mailbox: 4400186

CLARA, 32yrs old nurse who likes cosy nights in with a good bottle of wine and spending quality times with great company, if you feel the same pls get in touch. Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 422055

JENNY, 48, single independent attractive lady, tall and leggy, sensual and looking for very special male friend. Only genuine callers pls. Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 422033

ATTRACTIVE, slim woman looking for fun and excitement with guy 35-40 pls text. Text only Mailbox: 5419773

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LEE, 44, honest, genuine and very caring looking for the same in a woman. Text only Mailbox: 5422168

SINGLE business man , 5'11, brown eyes, well dressed, stocky build, fair skinned, successful, not bad looking, kind, generous WLTM for LTH. Text only Mailbox: 5441173

JOE single 40's Paddy with GSOH, warm hearted, WLTM lady single special lady to brighten up my life. Text only Mailbox: 5440368

WILL, age 60, slim, grey brown hair, non smoker, keen cyclist, kind Christian man WLTM caring lady to share life with. Lives near Monmouth. Text only Mailbox: 5447401

TONY, very slim, seeks slim female, looks/age unimportant. I am very broadminded, for no strings fun. Very discreet. Text only Mailbox: 5422177

ANDY, young looking 40, 5'15, slim build, from West Bromwich, likes films, socialising, looking for a fun lady who likes to laugh, for good times/possible LTR. Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 421783

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MALE early 60s, young outlook on life seeks similar 50+ or 60+ genuine female, with GSOH for friendship maybe more. Text only Mailbox: 54421562

NICK, 41, 5'7", Taurian, w/s handsome, likes keeping fit, seeks female 30-40s, for friendship and relationship. Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 421863

MALE, from West Brom, slim, young 49, looking for a special lady to spend fun times together and loving relationship. Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 421747

JOHN, 60s, sincere, looking to love and be loved, hurt in the past, likes meals out, sports and east coast. Text only Mailbox: 4467786

TOM, 58, dark hair, 60s seeks older mature female. Size and looks not important. Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 421595

PROFESSIONAL male 62, looking for curvy feminine woman, 50+, for friendship and possibly LTR. Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 42159394

BUSINESSMAN, 58, adventurous and broadminded seeks a wild companion for fun and new experiences. Text only Mailbox: 4453092

44YRS old male, kind, genuine and honest, looking a long-term relationship. Text only Mailbox: 5422168

MALE, 56, slim, 6ft, considerate and caring female, likes travel, animals, cosy nights in front of a log fire, looking for affectionate male for good times. Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 420715

SUE, 46, confident professional, sporty/active, seeking sensitive interesting guy for intimate evenings in with great food and conversations. Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 420701

PAUL 65yrs, Mobility prob but very caring looking for caring lady 60/70 for friendship and possibly LTR. Text only Mailbox: 5465394

SIMON, kind hearted, average looking chap, 44yrs, own business, sporty, fun loving. Would love to meet a genuine lady to spoil and pamper. Tel: 4138405

WAYNE, 40, cheeky, good career, likes gym. Looking for a lady who likes stimulating conversation and times. Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 418929

DARREN, 44, slim build, dark brown hair, green eyes, seeks genuine female for friendship, maybe more. Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 418809

WHITE male 58, looking for large built Indian or Black woman for no strings adult fun. Text only Mailbox: 422350

DAVE, blue eyes, St 51, looking for love. Only genuine replies. Text only Mailbox: 5457564

COLIN, 48, kind loving, seeks cuddly large full figured kind loving lady 50 to 60 for LTR, love, kisses, cuddles, holding hands as well. Text only Mailbox: 5439562

ANDREW, 53, widower, honest, genuine, loving, tactile hoping for love again. Text only Mailbox: 5449242

ANDY, young looking 49, 5'15, slim build, from West Bromwich, likes films, socialising, looking for a lady who likes to laugh, for good times/possible LTR. Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 421783

47 year old guy, tall, dark hair, blue eyes, seeks female 30-42, in the Leamington Spa/Rugby area for LTR. Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 422213

ALWAYS loved it and want to experience an older man, who knows how to make love? Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 422209

ASIAN, 48, kind and caring, wishes to meet lady for chats, weekend outings and LTR, any age/status. ACA. Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 422181

MICHELLE 39yr old nurse, slim, petite, blonde, blue eyes, looking to enjoy life with similar romantic, caring guy. Single dad also likes to be in a loving relationship, 39, 50yrs. Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 421111

SUSANNAH, 48, curly female, romantic, warm and cuddly, seeks similar kind female for a loving relationship with lots of cuddles and kisses. Looks unimportant. Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 417341

TRISH, 43, tall slim elegant long legged romantic, sensual, professional, lots to offer, seeks similar male who also appreciates the finer things in life. Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 421588

REBECCA tall slim elegant long legged romantic, sensual, professional, lots to offer, seeks similar male who also appreciates the finer things in life. Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 421589

TINA, 43, young looking attractive single female looking for love, with similar lonely heart resorting to advertising in the hope of finding love. Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 421617

DONNA 42yrs young separated female who is ready to start dating again, bubbly, attractive, blonde and raring to go, come on don't keep me waiting! Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 421560

SARAH, 39, home owner, likes animals, tattoos and texting, looking for friend hopefully leading to more. Get in touch! Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 421455

JANE, 47, voluptuous female, long hair, brown eyes, generous curves, would love to see cosy nights in with that special male. Age/looks important. Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 417985

SAMANTHA pretty blonde, very busty 36, intelligent, independent with a real lust for life, seeks big-hearted stocky male. Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 420599

TRISH, 44, tall slim young/good looking GSOH, professional, solvent, OHAC, affectionate and loves TLC, WLTM male who also likes to be in a loving relationship, 39, 50yrs. Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 422177

NICE old-fashioned girl, seeks kind, caring romantic lady for LTR. Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 416905

YOUNG looking 56 single male, looking for a special male, 40-50's for special relationship. Nottinghamshire. Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 4258643

ATTRACTIVE, tall, dark, professional male, 50+, GSOH, easygoing, looking to meet someone with a GSOH, to have a laugh and a joke and take things from there. Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 421906

SINGLE male, 49, caring, romantic, affectionate, many interests, WLTM, slim, busty female 25-45. Text only Mailbox: 4362337

PHIL, 53, 5'17, stocky athletic build, likes keep fit, swimming, cosy nights in, meals out, WLTM an honest, attractive, caring lady, with similar interests. Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 421385

PAT, 67, attractive, likes reading, holidays, seeking female, 55-72 for friendship. Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 405985

MELANIE, 47, seeks straight female friends for nights out, pubs, clubs, concerts, etc. Wolverhampton and surrounding areas. Text only to mailbox no: 5345662

CAROL, bi curious lady, blonde, 5ft2, short hair, blue eyes, size 14, WLTM a similar lady between 50-60 years old. Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 421281

CHRIS genuine gay female, 55, smoker, likes days out, cosy nights in, seeks local, feminine gay female, 40-50's for special relationship. Nottinghamshire. Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 373131

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MATURE male WLTM similar mature male, preferably hairy, bald and over 60 for friendship. Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 422191

MALE, 56, seeks older male, 70-80, for close adult fun, married welcome. Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 421475

MATURE male 61, WLTM male 50 or 60s, who is on the submissive side for fun and friendship. Text only Mailbox: 4236310

CAROL, bi curious lady, blonde, 5ft2, short hair, blue eyes, size 14, WLTM a similar lady between 50-60 years old. Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 421281

CHRIS genuine gay female, 55, smoker, likes days out, cosy nights in, seeks local, feminine gay female, 40-50's for special relationship. Nottinghamshire. Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 373131

Precision the key to perfection in this Prius



By Ian Donaldson

SOMETIMES it's the details that count; the little things that show how much care has been lavished on a car to make the driver happy.

In the case of the latest Toyota Prius – fourth generation of the biggest selling petrol/electric hybrid to date – it came down to the way the armrest on the door and between the seats had been positioned with millimetric precision.

Precisely placed to allow both elbows to rest while hands clasped the steering wheel at a semi-textbook twenty-to-four position.

And so relaxing: like the rest of the Prius in fact.

With its electric motor often letting the car pull away in silence for a little way before the petrol engine chimes in softly, this is a pleasant way to travel long distances.

Ideal when the car has to carry a tired driver and navigator-in-chief home from Heathrow after an anything but relaxing few days away.

There can be no more easy-going way to manage the tribulations of M25 and M1 than a car that never showed less than 63mpg on its dash readout and looked after gear changes for you with its smoothly acting auto transmission.

Charges

You can still buy an old-style Prius that plugs into a power point to charge its battery before needing to call in petrol power, but the car on test (and vastly the more popular version) simply charges when you slow down or brake.

Doesn't go nearly so far on current alone but is simpler to live with.

Lower, longer and wider than before, this latest Prius is also the most economical and least polluting to date, finding extra room for people and luggage thanks both to the bigger dimensions and a smaller but more powerful battery, now hidden under the rear seat.

Totally must smile when recalling reaction to the original Prius in 1997.

It looked odd and drove unconvincingly – but see the car world today, where everyone is urgently mixing petrol and electricity to match the demands of politicians eager for a greener future.

This latest Prius is aimed at keeping the car green (a little greener, in fact, with lowest ever fuel consumption and emissions) but making the car better to look at and drive.

Well, it certainly looks different, outside and in.

A mass of creases and curves tell you this is a car meant to stand out in the crowd.

It does, although you'll have to decide it that's in a good way.

Ease

Inside, you'll instantly spot the between seats cubby, with cupholders and space for your mobile phone and all in a plastic so white it brought a call of 'bidet' from my crew.

Well put together, though, and part of a cabin that's easy to spend time in and properly thought through for the driver.

It doesn't drive like a sports car, and thank goodness you might say.

Ease of long-term ownership is more important with something as sensible as the Prius, even with its new-found nod to looks.

The newcomer starts at £23,295 and comes in four versions.

All have the same 1.8 litre petrol engine, electric motor and auto gears and a safety package that includes adaptive cruise control that slows the car in traffic and accelerates away when the road clears.

It also detects pedestrians and cars ahead and will brake you to a standstill at lower speeds if you're not paying attention.

A camera also spots speed limits and posts them on the dash – sometimes getting things wrong.

The rest of the Prius is pretty well right, though, and a convincing way to keep costs down and do your bit to save the planet at the same time.

TESTED

Toyota Prius Business Edition

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Upping the bar on Kuga

By John Griffiths

You hear a lot about crossover or compact SUV cars these days: that's because they are effectively driving the new car market and almost every manufacturer has been rushing to get one in the showrooms.

Sales of such vehicles were up by 25 per cent in the first quarter of the year, way above the industry average.

Ford got into the race early, with the first Kuga almost a decade ago, and with many more, and newer rivals, now was a good time to update an improve the car.

Like most of the competition, there are front wheel and four wheel drive options and a range of petrol and diesel options at prices from just under £20,000, which does put them at something of a disadvantage to the private buyer, at least.

The new car is distinguished by its front end, with a more steeply sloping bonnet (to increase its pedestrian safety rating), new lights and a lot of new technology inside.

Also new to the line up is the entry level Zetec model with the fuel and tax saving 120PS version of Ford's now familiar 1.5 litre 'EcoBoost' turbocharged petrol engine.

The test car was fitted with the 148bhp (there's also a 178bhp version) and this comes with front wheel drive only – the top-rated petrol and diesel units are fitted to all-wheel drive examples.

Of course many of the compact SUVs you see on the roads are two-wheel drive: many owners don't want or need a full-fledged 4x4 with the extra expense that involves.

But they like the style, image, tall 'command' driving position, ease of access (due to higher seats) and practicality.

That said, even the front wheel drive Kuga has some limited off-road (or rough track at any rate) ability as it shares the same high ground clearance, with skid plates to protect the underside, and long travel suspension as its more expensive siblings.

The use of a relatively small capacity engine with turbocharging is a feature gaining ground across the motor industry. Used carefully, it saves fuel while still having the power to respond, for overtaking for example when necessary: it's 0 to 62mph sprint takes under ten seconds, impressive for a car of this size with just 1,500ccs under the bonnet.

The turbo also gives it more torque, more 'grunt' at lower engine speeds like a modern diesel, so that it cruises quietly and smoothly at motorway speeds.

Indeed, the Kuga is an excellent, refined motorway cruiser: the engine is barely breathing heavily and is so quiet you're more conscious of the slipstream being deflected by the big off-roader style door mirrors. It feels a very grown up sort of car.

It drives just how you would expect from a Ford: the gearshift is slick, the steering nicely weighted and despite its height the body is well controlled so it's happy to hustle along twisty b-roads without upsetting passengers.

High mileage or business users may prefer the more expensive to buy but cheaper to tax and run 2.0 litre diesel – the 148bhp version returns around 60mpg with a CO2 rating several tax bands lower at 122g/km.

Inside, the Kuga matches up to the opposition for space and particularly headroom. The rear bench has two large outer seats (which can be reclined individually) with a



The Kuga has a lot of competition these days, but this latest makeover looks like keeping its place in the scramble for compact SUV sales

central cushion perhaps best suited to a younger member of the family.

Oddly, the Zetec model as tested has a much different instrument layout to the higher grade Titanium. The centre console is topped by a control screen for stereo, phone and other functions. The test car was also fitted with the optional satnav, which for £650 gets you a slightly larger screen plus a basic repeater function between the speedo and tachometer.

The Kuga now has Ford's sophisticated SYNC system, which allows the driver to use voice commands for a range of functions as well as features such as au-

dible text messaging and instant access to emergency assistance. Cruise control with speed limiter, Ford's excellent Quickclear windscreens, front fog lamps, twin chromed exhausts, manual air conditioning and electrically operated and heated door mirrors are all included in basic specification.

Boot space is among the best in class, with 406 litres which can be increased to 1,603 if the rear seats are folded down.

The Kuga has a lot of competition these days, but this latest makeover – coupled with a cheaper and more economical entry level version – looks like keeping its place in the scramble for compact SUV sales.

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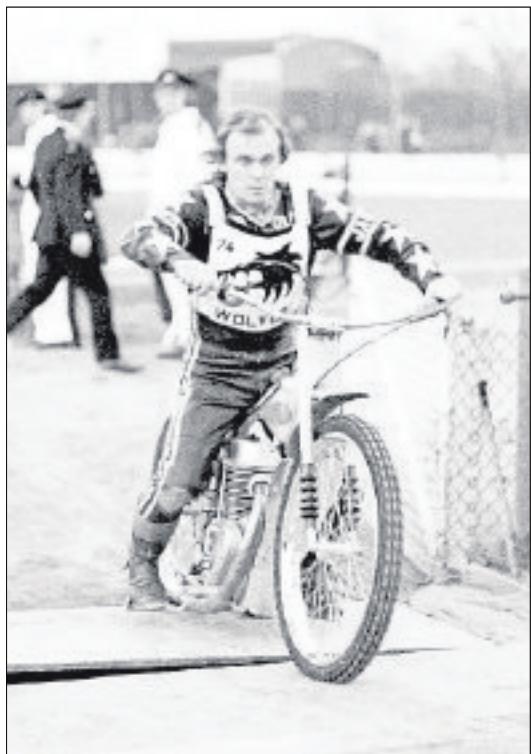
Ole Olsen with the fans at Monmore Green



Champion - badge of honour for Ole Olsen



1981 speedway final, Tommy Knudsen (3rd) Bruce Penhall (1st) and Ole Olsen (2nd)



Wolves ace Ole Olsen ready for action

No dummy, Ole stood tall alongside Borg and Ali

SPORTING MEMORIES

By Tim Hamblin

A lot of people, they see the goal. When they start losing it, it's because they've taken their eyes off the goal.

HE may have a waxwork of himself in the loft, but Ole Olsen is no-one's idea of a dummy. 'The Great Dane' was Denmark's first speedway world champion.

His three wins in the seventies smashed open a door through which fellow countrymen Erik Gundersen, Hans Nielsen and Jan Ø Pedersen later poured through in a golden age of shale for that nation.

And Olsen's stature in the world of sport was underlined not only by his likeness being cast in the Danish Madame Tussaud's, but where it was placed.

"Madame Tussaud's made me in wax in 1975, I think, or '78," he said. "I was standing in Madame Tussaud's in Copenhagen together with Bjorn Borg and Muhammad Ali! They were great sportsmen, so it was good."

Trickster

"They gave it to me five or six years later. I've got it up in the loft. As a joke one day, when I was away, my sons stuck it in our bed and my wife (Ulla) came in! That was Jacob, who rode for Coventry (and Wolves). He was a bit of a trickster!"

Olsen's deeds on track are legendary. On top of his three world crowns the former Wolves star was national champion a dozen times, helped Denmark to three world team crowns, won the prestigious Pardubice Golden Helmet on no fewer than seven occasions – oh, and knocked off the Australian championship on

a trip down under. The fact that Olsen, as a non-Australian, was not eligible was disregarded for a more important factor – his drawing power. But the 69-year-old's influence in the sport is far wider.

He built the celebrated Vojens circuit in his homeland, prepared tracks worldwide and helped launch and run the Grand Prix series that superseded the old one-off world championship finals – his other son Torben is now managing director of its promoters BSI Speedway.

Olsen retired as a rider more than 30 years ago, yet his "An Evening With..." appearance at the Cleveland Arms in Wolverhampton was an immediate sell-out.

It all seems a world away from his first appearance on these shores, as a promising youngster taken under the wing of all-time great Ivan Mauger at Newcastle. But one thing Olsen has never lacked is focus.

"Sports psychology was coming in in the seventies and when I won the world championship in 1971 the Swedes were doing a lot of it," he said.

"So I got a bit interested, studied it. My goal gave me the drive. A lot of people, they see the goal. When they start losing it, it's because they've taken their eyes off the goal."

But Olsen retained that focus, even to the extent of leaving Wolves when at the height of his powers.

His six-year stint at Monmore Green in the era of promoter Mike Parker featured two world championships, but at the end of 1975 Olsen held out for a move to Coventry even though the rider control system of the time allocated him to Hull.

"It was not because I wanted to leave Wolves, but in those days a lot of the world finals were run on bigger tracks," he said.

Polished

"We ran in Poland, we ran in Sweden, and Wembley also. Most of those tracks were about 400m, the Polish and Swedish ones. I wanted to go to a little bit bigger track."

In addition Olsen, while looking back fondly at his Monmore days, was clearly captivated by the way things were run up the road at Brandon under the polished promotion of Charles Ochiltree.

Olsen spent eight years at Brandon, during which he landed his third world title in 1978, before retiring in 1983. Perhaps inevitably he won his very last world final race.



Ole Olsen talks to sports sub-editor Tim Hamblin



Former world champion speedway rider Ole Olsen at 'Talk in at the Cleveland Arms'

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Ole! Speedway ace Olsen on why he's no dummy

Page 39



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Heathens still unbeaten on home track

Cradley 48 Isle Of Wight 42

CRADLEY were forced to dig deep to preserve their unbeaten record at Monmore Green as they prevailed in a nervy encounter with the Isle of Wight.

The patched-up Heathens were without influential No.1 Ashley Morris or injured duo Jack Kingston and Bradley Andrews as they looked to bounce back from a 51-39 defeat at Brandon against Coventry on Friday. There, Heathens failed to recover from a slow start and slipped to their second successive away loss after being well beaten by Birmingham at Perry Barr.

But they bounced back on Monday. With the scores level after 10 heats, they looked in danger of suffering their first defeat at Wolverhampton track since being beaten by Buxton in August 2011. But they put in a brave performance to emerge victorious in a tense finale and maintain their perfect 2016 home record.

The Warriors, bolstered by guest bookings for former Heathen Tom Perry and teenage sensation Dan Bewley, emerged with a well-deserved consolation point for their efforts.

But it was ultimately a job well done for Will Pottinger's young side as they were once again led superbly by star heat-leader trio skipper Max Clegg, Luke Cheddell and guest Ben Morley playing vital roles.

Morley won each of his opening three rides to keep Wight at bay. He then packed the minor placings alongside Clegg in a breathtaking heat 13 before Clegg stormed home in the penultimate race to wrap up victory.

Cheddell also started and ended his night with race wins, including a timely triumph in heat 12. However, it was crucial contributions from battling duo Ben Basford and James Purchase which arguably made all the difference.

Brummies dig in for thrilling draw at home to Kent

BIRMINGHAM maintained their unbeaten start to the season with hard fought 45-45 draw at home to Kent.

It was a closely contested thriller at Perry Barr with no more than two points separating the sides throughout the meeting.

Surestop Brummies boss Graham Drury had no complaints about the result and was keen to focus on the positives.

"A draw was totally the fair result, there's no doubt about that whatsoever," Drury said.

"Two evenly matched teams with some top quality riders and what a meeting they put on for the supporters on the terraces. That was an outstanding advert for National League speedway and the tension throughout created a great atmosphere."

"Credit to Kent for their superb efforts. I think both teams fully deserve to continue their unbeaten runs after that."

"The track caught us out a little bit but all seven of our riders can learn a lot from that going to King's Lynn next Wednesday."

Welsh rules no obstacle for Old Hales



The U10s in action against Mold

THE annual exodus of the Old Hales under 8s to under 12s on rugby tour to Prestatyn took place over the weekend of April 22. Young players, family and friends enjoyed a weekend of rugby, fun games and a chance to forge friendships at other clubs.

Better known as the Gladiators, the under 8s took on two very strong Mold teams, both games won by the Gladiators doing themselves, coaches and parents proud.

A last minute glitch meant the U10s had to quickly get used to Welsh rules.

Junior Rugby

So the first game was a heavy defeat for Old Hales but the young players were soon on top of things and with better defensive organisation preventing Mold using their wings Old Hales held them to a draw. Good tries by Kealan Cheadle and Adam Harris.

The Saxons (U11s) played two games using the unfamiliar Welsh rules. The first game against Mold was a closely fought game with the home side winners 17-14. The second game

was won 31-17 by another visiting team, Knotsford.

U12s played on an almost full sized pitch with lineouts for the first time and ran in six tries to win in good style. Good rucking and tackling from the forwards and a couple of lung bursting runs from James Quinn with James Lacey slotting over a conversion helped the team win comfortably.

Old Hales Mini Junior Section welcome new members from the age of four upwards. A friendly welcome is guaranteed and everyone gets to play.

TEAM UNDONE BY POOR START

HALESOWEN skipper Richard Brooker says a poor start cost his side in their Birmingham League defeat at the hands of Harborne.

He's also revealed how he's counting down the days to getting more players back in the fold and available for selection as they have started the season with a depleted squad.

Halesowen hit 205-8 with George Land taking 3-31 – and the total would have been much worse but for an impressive stand of 61 for the seventh wicket between Hassan Qaumi (51) and Musharraf Shazad (35).

Harborne had little trouble in reaching their target with four wickets spare and their skipper Andy Lloyd was in fine form with 82.

Said Brooker: "We were undone by a poor start and at 80-5 we were staring down the barrel."

"However it was good to see Hassan and Musharraf in fine form but 205 on a ground with modest boundaries was always going to be difficult to defend."

Crucial

"We currently have six bowlers out through, amongst other things injury, work, exams and holidays and hopefully as soon as that sorts itself out we will be more consistent in this crucial first phase of the season."

The second team picked up their first victory of the season in a tense rain-affected finish at Seth Somers Park.

With a depleted Halesowen bowling attack, Harborne clocked up 253 in their 45-overs.

In reply Priyesh Dhoobab (64) and Shoaib Mohammed (59) were the mainstays as the host club overcame the revised target of 169 to win by six wickets.

The win places them third in the table going into this week's game against Hinckley.

Captain Richard Cox said: "It seems to be coming together nicely at the moment but there is a long way to go."

This Saturday sees the first team at home to Stourbridge in local derby action, the seconds go to Hinckley, thirds at home to Stourport and fourth travel to Stourport.

Good Evans! Reanne lifts trophy



Reanne Evans receives her trophy from association life member Vic Bartlam, aged 87

DUDLEY'S Reanne Evans and Darryn Walker produced a fitting finale to the Staffordshire and West Midlands Billiards and Snooker League season.

The duo served up some high quality snooker that included three century breaks in the Individual Championship at Wednesday Conservative Club.

Reigning women's world champion Evans (Sedgley Ex-Service) came out on top with a superb 102 clearance in the ninth and deciding frame to lift the title for a

second time. Two other individual winners were also crowned. Shifnal team-mates Mick Brezwyn and Paul Lloyd contested the Individual Plate final at Wolverhampton Electric Club, with the latter taking home the prize.

The Individual Handicap final at Woodfield Social saw Rob Wharne (Stafford Institute) defeat John Fallows (Shifnal), who received 21 start per frame.

In the Inter-Town final, Landywood beat holders Brandhall 5-1 at Golden Cue Snooker Club.



Opponent Darryn Walker

Cobra Classic run links up with hospice

TWO local organisations are joining forces to mark their 25th anniversaries with a running event.

Halesowen-based running and triathlon club Cobra and Mary Stevens Hospice are both celebrating their 25th year.

They are joining forces to stage the annual Cobra Classic road race, with half of the profits going to the hospice. Entries are now open for the Classic 10km road race and a 3.5km Fun Run on Sunday at Old Halesoniens Rugby Club.

Race director Chris Pearson said: "Runners of all abilities are welcome for the Classic. It is a great 10km event that runs through Halesowen and ends in the idyllic countryside of Waseall Grove."

"The Fun Run is held in the grounds of the rugby club and is open to all age groups. It is a great event for all members of the family."

The Fun Run starts at 10am with the Classic starting at 10.30am, and every year runners compliment the organisers on the encouragement received from marshals and other volunteers.

Each person who finishes the race will receive a medal and there are prizes for category winners.

Refreshments including homemade cakes will be available in the clubhouse after the races.

"Cobra's motto is 'Running for Fitness, Running for Fun' and these days we also say please run to support your local hospice at this fantastic annual event," said Chris.

Enter online at www.runnersworld.co.uk/events or via www.marystevenshospice.co.uk, and entries will also be available on the day.

Swimmers third as new campaign starts

ROUND one of the Mercian Summer League at Solihull saw Halesowen Swimming Club in third with 186 points behind Rugby on 201 and Cannock Phoenix on 194.

That put them ahead of Perry Beeches & SSS, 168; Kingsbury Aquarius with 164; and Walsall with 16.

Halesowen swimmers got the new campaign off to a good start. The boys got the individual wins with Adam Ryan top in the 12 years and under 100m backstroke, Max Rollason in the open 100m backstroke, Jamie Worton in the 12 years and under 50m butterfly and Oliver Bradley-Wood in the 12 years and under 100m freestyle.

The boys' 12 years and under relay team were unbeatable, winning both the freestyle and medley relays. The girls' 12 years and under freestyle relay team were also winners.

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